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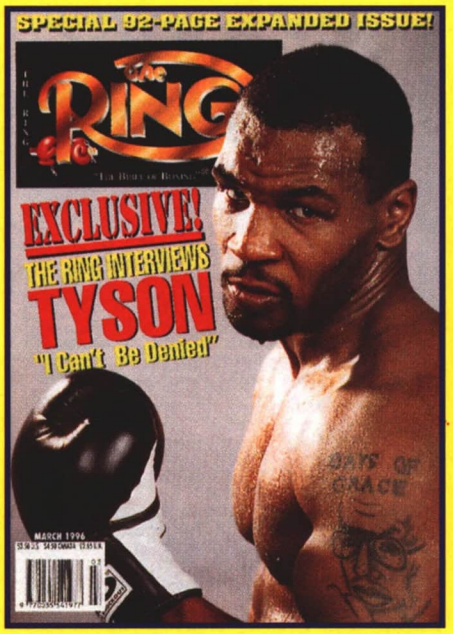

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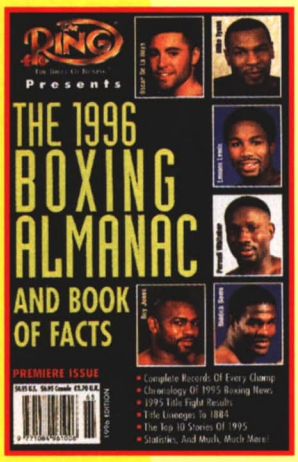

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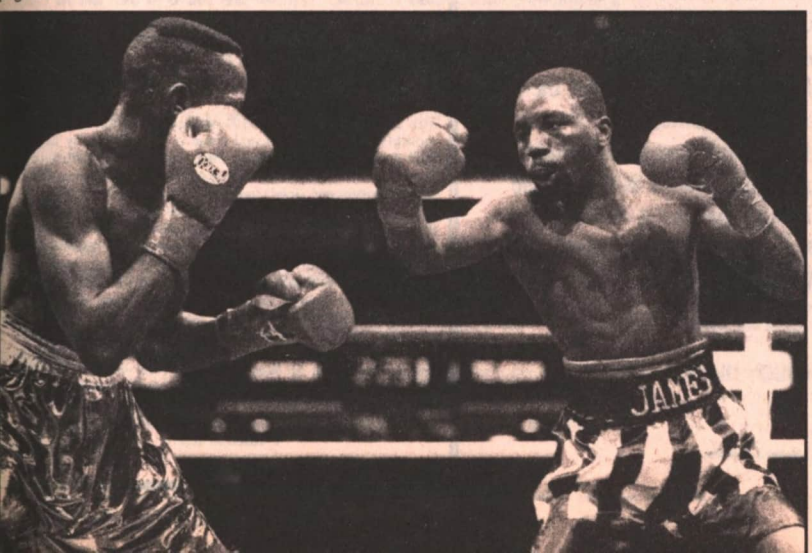

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RINGSIDE

It seems almost unbelievable now, but Sugar Ray Leonard, an Olympic gold medal winner at the 1976 Games in Montreal, decided to turn pro only after the failing health of his parents created an economic crisis. Times have changed, and I wonder how many of today's top amateurs calculated the Sugar Ray-like dollars a gold medal might bring even before they made the Olympic team.

I think back to my visit with the 1988 U.S. Olympic boxers, a loosely knit team that was symbolized by Kelcie Banks, who never said hello without handing out an autographed picture of himself. Banks got stretched in Seoul and never made the big bucks, but Riddick Bowe and Michael Carbajal, neither of whom even won a gold medal, sure did. And another silver medalist, Roy Jones, hasn't done too badly for himself either. Those guys and their teammates were keenly aware of the riches Olympic success could bring.

Instead of guessing which of the dozen 1996 Olympic boxers will become millionaires (one or two are already being paid handsomely), I find myself guessing what it must have been like when amateurs thought solely about competing at the highest level and proudly representing the ol' red-white-and-blue. One of the nice things about Olympic boxing is that when a U.S. amateur wins a gold medal, it's indeed a special, defining moment. Do I anticipate dabbing at my tears when the members of Dream Team III, after crushing Croatia in the gold medal game, gather at the platform for the playing of *The Star Spangled Banner?* I think not. In fact, I'll probably be watching the Yankees game.

USA Today's Jon Saraceno, who covered this year's Olympic Trials and Box-Offs, told me there was a meat-market atmosphere to both competitions, with many of professional boxing's powerbrokers in attendance to jockey for leverage. That has been going on ever since the 1984 Games in Los Angeles, if not before. "But for a lot of the kids, the dream is still the dream," Saraceno added. "A lot of them don't have any great illusions, especially the lighter-weight guys."

It sure seems nicer that way. I have nothing against welterweight Fernando Vargas, the 1996 Olympic boxer most zealously wooed by the wolves. Whether Vargas wins a gold medal or not, his economic future will be secure. But what about light flyweight Albert Guardado or flyweight Eric Morel? For them, the Olympic experience isn't necessarily the means to an end, but the end itself, a reward for a long, hard journey. Here's to hoping one of these fighters wins a medal. Bronze, silver, or gold—it doesn't matter.

I recently spoke with three-time former light heavyweight champion Marvin Johnson, who, fighting at 165 pounds, won a bronze medal at the 1972 Games in Munich. "None of us talked about what we'd do after the Games," he said. "We were in it for the fun. But all of us felt very patriotic, especially since the Olympics was in a foreign country. We felt like we had something to fight for."

And it wasn't money.

Steve Farhood
Editor-in-Chief

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THE TOP 50

I have doubts about the feature in your June 1996 issue, "The Top 50 Fighters Of The Last 50 Years." First off, Flash Elorde (number 47) does not belong. Granted, he dominated his division for seven years, and that's quite an accomplishment. But at the time, the 130-pound class was weak. He wouldn't have fared nearly so well during Alexis Arguello's stay at that weight. Four men who were defeated by Arguello went on to win the title. And of the four fighters in the top 50 that held the junior lightweight title, three (Arguello, Julio Cesar Chavez, and Azumah Nelson) would have beaten Elorde. I believe Alfredo Escalera, whom you didn't rate, would also have beaten him.

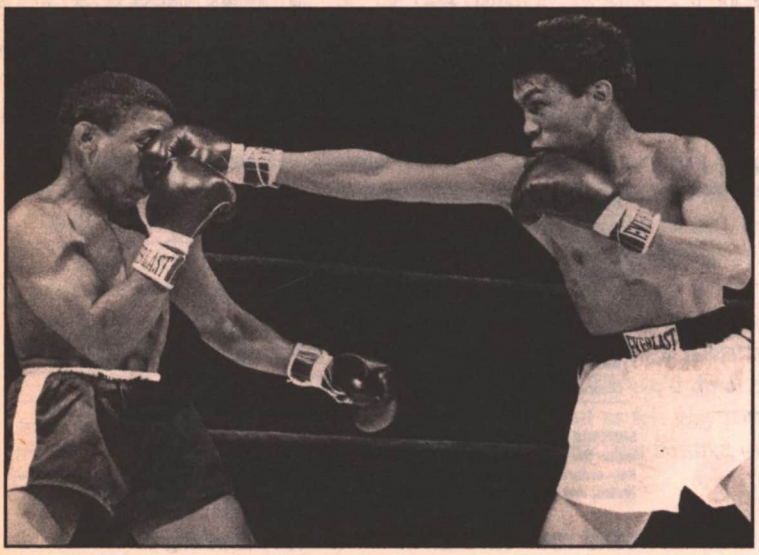
Sonny Liston (number 48) should have been rated much higher. Before age and Muhammad Ali caught up to him, he cleaned up the division, beating Eddie Machen, Zora Folley, Cleveland Williams, and Floyd Patterson.

Vicente Saldivar (number 50) should also have been rated higher. He won the title from a fine champion in Sugar Ramos, defended it seven times, and then regained it after retirement.

And finally, Mike McCallum (number 49) was a fine and respected champion, but his losses to Sumbu Kalambay and James Toney should have kept him out of the top 50. A better case could be made for Luis Rodriguez, who fought the very best of the welterweight and middleweight divisions. Conversely, McCallum was denied the chance to fight Roberto Duran, Sugar Ray Leonard, and Thomas Hearns.

JIM AMATO
Savannah, OH

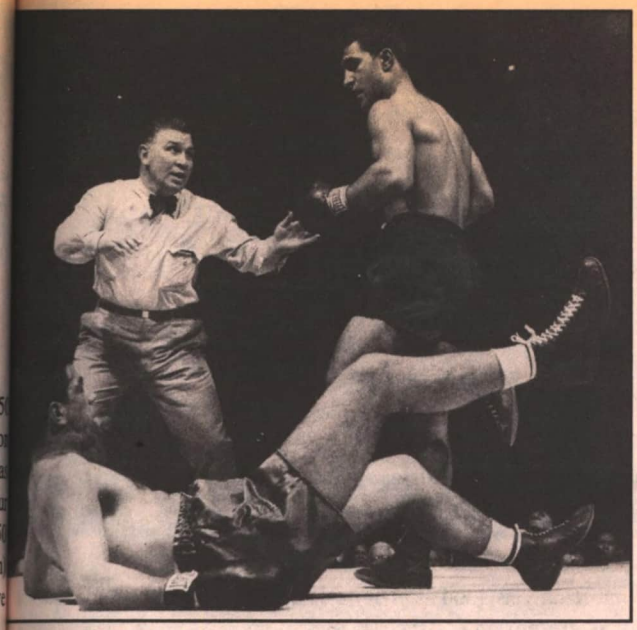
Time for a little Farhood-bashing. "The Top 50 Fighters Of The Last 50 Years" was by and large a wonderful attempt to quantify and categorize the best fighters since 1946. However, there were two obvious blunders. There is no way in Palookaville that Ray Leonard deserved to be rated as high as fifth. Sugar Ray was a marvelous fighter, but in no way should he be held in higher esteem than Carlos Monzon (number seven), Alexis Arguello (number eight), or Archie Moore (number 16). Leonard had his best night against Thomas Hearns in their first fight. In my opinion, that was his last great performance. Roberto Duran beat him the first time and quit in the second fight. (I don't count the third fight at all.) His win against Marvin Hagler was highly questionable. Hearns beat him the second time around. And Donnie Lalonde? C'mon!



Did we overrate Filipino legend Flash Elorde, shown vs. Miguel Berrios, in our feature, "The Top 50 Fighters Of The Last 50 Years"? Reader Jim Amato says Elorde suffered from Big-Fish-In-A-Small-Pond Syndrome.

Also, Larry Holmes is better than number 17. He reigned longer than Muhammad Ali and ranks second at heavyweight in title defenses. He would have jabbed the ears off Rocky Marciano (number 12) and would have wiped the canvas with little Ezzard Charles (number 14). Holmes' only losses have come to other heavyweight champions in Michael Spinks, Mike Tyson, Evander Holyfield, and Oliver McCall, and all of them came when he was well past his prime. Holmes belongs in the top 10.

THOMAS K. STEWART
Ellsworth, ME



Some fans feel Rocky Marciano, pictured crushing Carmine Vingo, is overrated at number 12. Others think that as the only unified world champion to have retired unbeaten, he's consistently underrated.

How could you possibly have left out former light heavyweight champion Joey Maxim? He defeated Sugar Ray Robinson, whom you ranked first. Additionally, he held wins over heavyweight champions Floyd Patterson and Jersey Joe Walcott. Maxim was arguably the best defensive fighter in the history of the 175-pound class. He was the Willie Pep of the light heavyweights—and you rank Pep at number four!

ROBERT J. COOK
Macomb, IL

You did an outstanding job. But there was a bias toward Hispanic fighters. Roberto Duran lost to Kirkland Laing, Pat Lawlor, and Wilfred Benitez, and was brutally kayoed by Thomas Hearns. That just does not get you a number-three ranking. Also, Carlos Zarate (number 11) and Wilfredo Gomez (number 22) were overrated.

I also feel you do not fully understand the difference between the light heavyweight, cruiserweight, and heavyweight classes. Rocky Marciano (number 12) and Evander Holyfield (number 44) were only cruiserweights. Sonny Liston (number 48) was the first real heavyweight champion of our era.

And Gene Fullmer (number 42) beat Sugar Ray Robinson, Carmen Basilio, and Benny Paret, and gave Dick Tiger three good fights despite being over the hill. Fullmer originated winning ugly, but was great at what he did. He should have been rated much higher.

PAUL SEKULA
Arlington, VA

Rocky Marciano and Jake LaMotta were underrated, and it isn't right. It seems like in these politically correct times, the accomplishments of Caucasian athletes are overlooked in an effort to make up for social problems of the past. It is the media that is guilty.

Marciano 12th? Please, give me a break. If he weighed 184 pounds when he won the title, who in the entire history of boxing could have beaten him within 20 pounds either way? Maybe no one. Rocky had a shot with any heavyweight, no matter the weight. And check the record: Who fought better black fighters, Joe Louis or Marciano?

As for LaMotta, he fought Sugar Ray Robinson real close no less than six times. He scored two knockdowns, while Robinson never floored him. Also, LaMotta fought all the black fighters Robinson ducked, like Holman Williams and Lloyd Marshall. (Didn't Robinson duck a certain black fighter named Charley Burley?) To rate Thomas Hearns (number 25) over LaMotta is crazy. Jake would have walked right through Hearns.

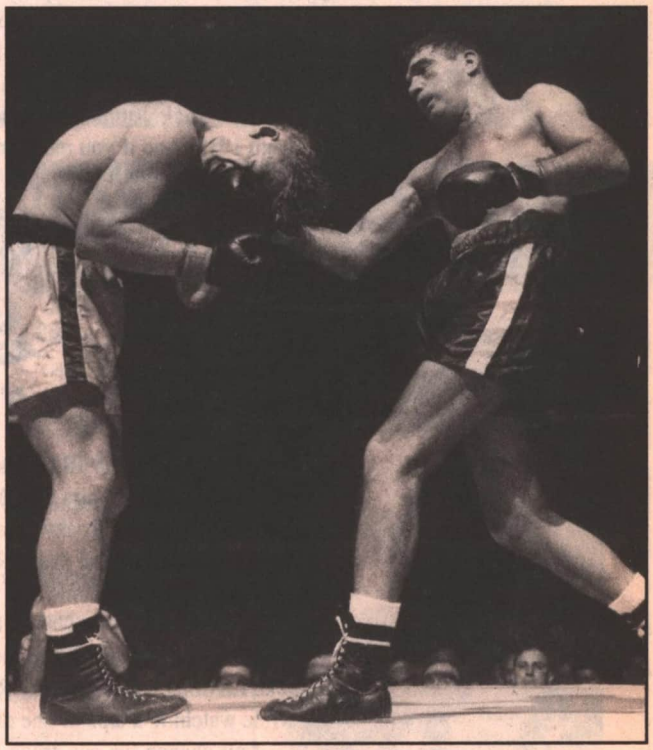
These fighters were all-time greats and heroes of their Italian brothers, as well as all Caucasians and African-Americans. Also missing in the top 50 was Marcel Cerdan, or did Mr. Farhood think that rating a magnificent Algerian-born fighter wouldn't have rated as politically correct as other minorities?

ARAM ALKAZOFF
Oxford, WI

Your staff of baby-boomer boxing "experts" trumpets the superiority of Muhammad Ali over Joe Louis. Your magazine no longer bears a resemblance to Nat Fleischer's masterpiece. Its greatness died with him. So instead of feeding off his reputation, why not drop the logo of THE RING and call your magazine *The Baby-Boomer's Boxing Rag*?

Signed, just another 72-year-old former amateur boxer and lifelong fan whose experience, knowledge, and opinions mean absolutely nothing in this age of mediocrity.

DONALD LINDHOLM
Jamestown, NY ■



Joey Maxim applies a leather shampoo to Irish Bob Murphy during their 1951 light heavyweight title fight. Maxim won on points. Does he deserve to be rated among the best 50 fighters of the last 50 years?

ROUND ONE

CATCHING UP ON THE CLASSICS

As a boxing buff in the '90s, you're only as good as your cable operator. What too many hard-core fans are missing is the Classic Sports Network, a 24-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week celebration of the greatest stories, events, and programming in sports history. Classic Sports is currently available full-time in 6 million households. If your cable operator doesn't carry the network, make a phone call or write a letter. We did.

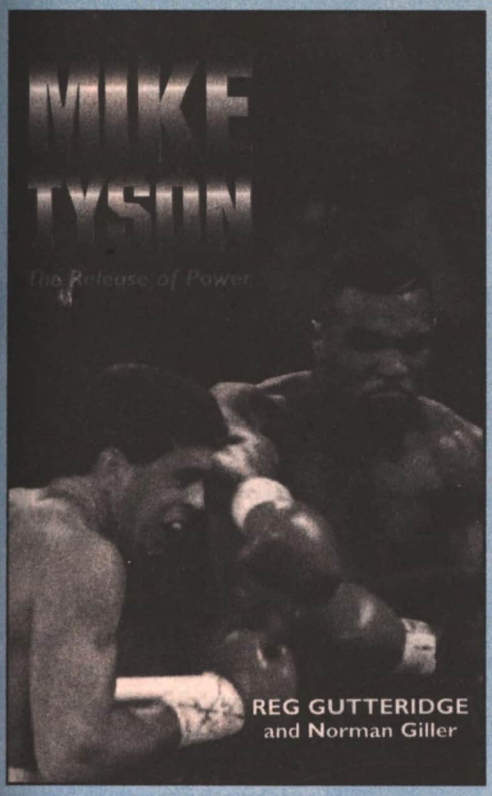
What makes Classic Sports, which was launched in 1995, particularly attractive to fight fans is the network's long-term license for total access to the 18,000-bout library of Big Fights Inc. "Big Fights is one-stop shopping," explained Brian Bedol, Classic Sports' CEO. "It's the most complete, most historic, largest collection of fights. There's stuff dating back to 1896. There's Jack Johnson-Jim Jeffries from 1910. And if you mention a fight from the '40s, '50s, '60s, or '70s, we probably have it."

Better yet, they show it. Bedol estimates that 15 percent of his programming is boxing-related. In addition to superfights like Ali-Foreman, Ali-Frazier III, and so many of the gems from boxing's golden age, Classic Sports airs The Main Event, which originally ran in 1961 and '62. Hosted by Rocky Marciano, the show features casual interviews with celebrities like Paul Newman, Sammy Davis Jr., and Jackie Gleason. Then Marciano and the guest sit down and watch—with the viewers, of course—a classic fight. Another golden oldie is The Way It Was, which aired on PBS in the '70s. The format: Curt Gowdy chats with Jake LaMotta and Sugar Ray Robinson, or Willie Pep and Sandy Saddler, while watching a tape of one of their legendary fights.

Any chance we can trade the Home Shopping Network for Classic Sports?

–Steve Farhood

THE BOXING BOOKSHELF



Reg Gutteridge and Norman Giller have covered boxing since Rocky Marciano was king of the ring some 40 years ago. And that's the problem with their collaboration, *Mike Tyson: The Release Of Power* (Warwick Publishing, $16.95), the most recent look at today's king of the ring. Gutteridge, a well-respected British journalist, and Giller, a freelance author whose main contribution to the book is statistics, love the Sweet Science. They're from the old school of boxing journalism—they idolize these modern gladiators, whose lives they describe with affection and admiration. Nothing is wrong with that if you want a romantic, anecdotal picture of pugilism, but this collection of observations purports to be a study of Tyson's character and life. It clearly is not.

The Release Of Power is divided into two sections. Part one is Tyson the Man, in which the major events of his life—his troubled childhood, the years with legendary trainer Cus D'Amato, winning and the losing the world title, his rape trial—are briefly touched upon. They're presented in factual detail, with very little in-depth observation. For instance, Gutteridge's view of Tyson's trial is that "Iron Mike" got a raw deal in Indianapolis. Hey, Reg, tell us something we haven't already heard.

Part two is an appendix of stats that includes a chronology of Tyson's fights, both amateur and professional, a breakdown of every heavyweight champion from John L. Sullivan, and a record of heavyweight title fights dating back to 1892. As a reference source, part two is invaluable. It would make a great companion piece to THE RING's 1996 *Boxing Almanac And Book Of Facts*.

Unfortunately, some of Gutteridge and Giller's facts are wrong. For example, Riddick Bowe didn't fight Buster Douglas on November 4, 1995. His opponent was Evander Holyfield. Such glaring errors suggest the authors put this project together in a hasty fashion to cash in on the reemergence of Tyson on the world stage. Next time, gentlemen, take your time and give us your best shot. This wasn't it.

–Warren Tasker

THE 10 LEAST-KNOWN TERMS OF MIKE TYSON'S PROBATION

10. Isn't allowed to chew gum and walk with a woman at the same time.
9. Can't rent black sexploitation films starring Pam Grier.
8. Must cancel subscription to *Sports Illustrated* before the next swimsuit issue.
7. Has to give up lifelong hobby of collecting Barbie dolls. Can keep all Kens.
6. Must attend hypnosis until he's convinced his relationships with Suzette Charles, Naomi Campbell, and Robin Givens were strictly platonic.
5. May attend topless bars, but only if encased in a sensory deprivation tank.
4. Will have to answer to Patricia Gifford if caught hiding Victoria's Secret catalog inside latest issue of THE RING.
3. May attend trendy dance clubs only between the hours of 10 a.m. and noon.
2. Must be chaperoned while engaging in co-ed chat groups on Internet.
1. Has recently sacrificed collection of *Baywatch* tapes for heavy editing.

Robin Givens: Strictly platonic, right?

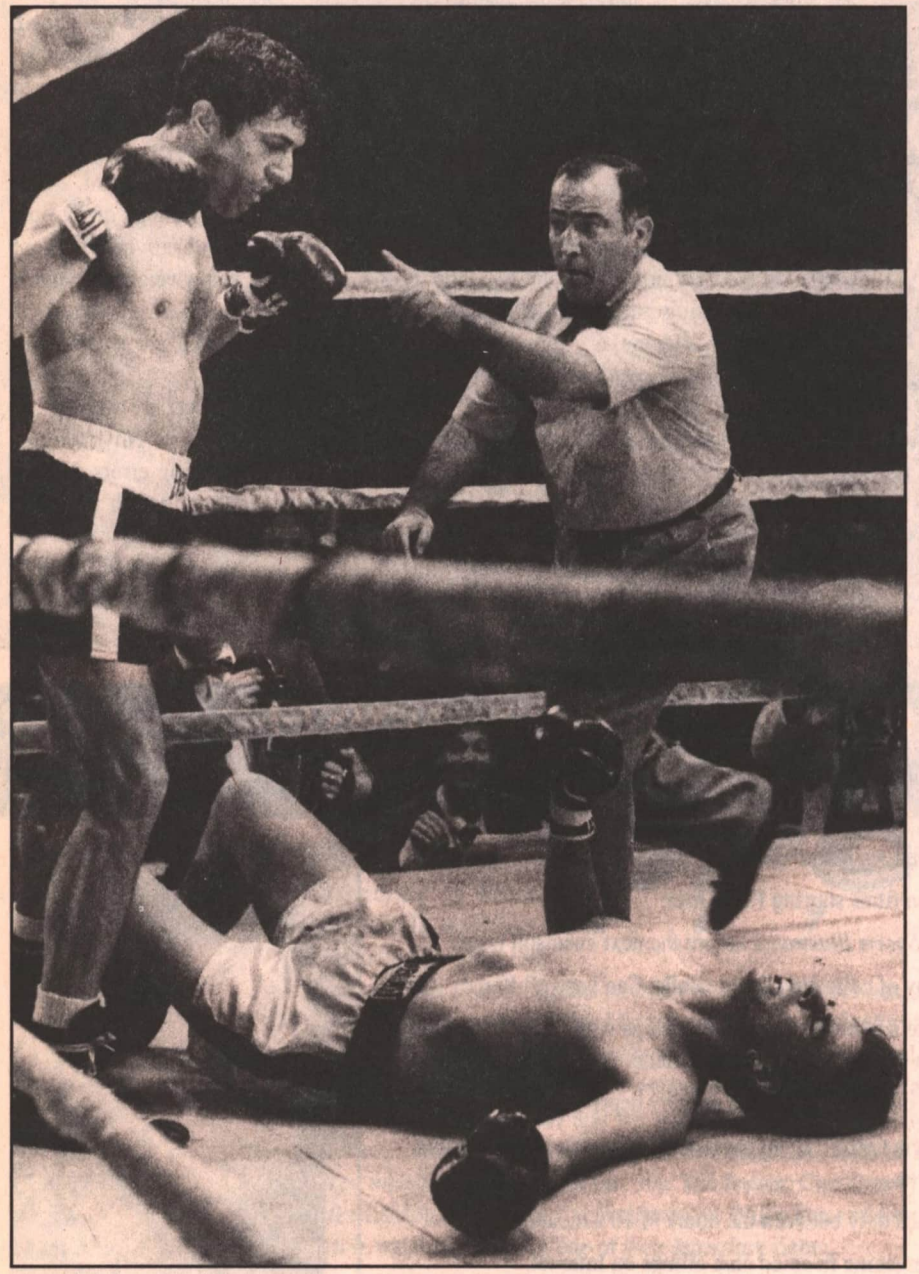
BOXING IN THE CLASSROOM

When Vassar College professors Frank Bergon and Benjamin G. Kohl introduced a course called "Reading The Fights: Boxing And American Values" into the curriculum in 1994, their ears were ringing for days from the laughter of skeptical students who dismissed it as the ultimate gut course.

But the laughs quickly faded when the students who took the course found it to be one of the more difficult offerings that semester—some of them barely passing.

Bergon, an English professor, and Kohl, a history professor, took their new multidisciplinary course seriously and enlisted the work of writers Jack London, Ralph Ellison, A.J. Liebling, films like *Raging Bull* and *The Great White Hope*, art by George Bellows and Thomas Eakins, and works by various social theorists to help answer questions such as: What is the significance of boxing in the United States? What are the roles of race, class, and ethnicity in boxing? And what is the relation between women, boxing, and violence?

The course is now one of the more popular on campus, and enrollees are mostly young women who have turned their revulsion into understanding, echoing the sentiments of novelist Joyce Carol Oates, who wrote that life is a metaphor for boxing.



Raging Bull: *Boxing and American culture*

Oates, in fact, was one of the distinguished guests who helped open up a related art exhibit called "American Fighters: A Century Of Boxing In Art" that was featured at Vasser's Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center from March 29 through May 26. The exhibit featured 54 photographs and prints that told the history of America from the boxing viewpoint.

Oates, along with former heavyweight champion Floyd Patterson, former light heavyweight champion Jose Torres, boxing photographers Larry Fink, Toby Old, and Arlene Schulman, and Bergon and Kohl, were part of the opening-day symposium. Before a packed auditorium of students, professors, and administrators, they discussed a variety of complex issues all related to the Sweet Science.

"It's about time boxing got the respect of these stuffy academic types," said a security guard at the art gallery during the opening reception. "They're appreciating a sport I have known and loved all my life."

–Roberto Santiago

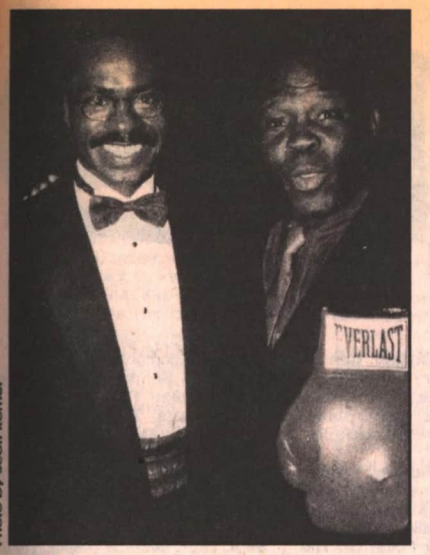


Photo by Scott Romer

Hurricane Carter with Emile Griffith

BOY, DID THEY HAVE THE WRONG GUY!

Looking for a dealer who had just sold crack cocaine to an undercover cop, Toronto police handcuffed a man outside a restaurant in April. Big mistake. According to *Sports Illustrated*, the suspect turned out to be 60-year-old former middleweight contender Rubin "Hurricane" Carter, who wrongly spent 19 years in prison after a murder conviction.

Police termed the arrest another "case of mistaken identity." The Toronto-based Carter, who happens to the executive director of the Association in Defense of the Wrongly Convicted, is considering legal action.

THE PUNCHLINES

"It's a shame that the baddest man on the planet has turned into a track star. I would love to take this out of the courtroom and into the ring, but it's quite clear that Mike Tyson is deathly afraid of Lennox Lewis."

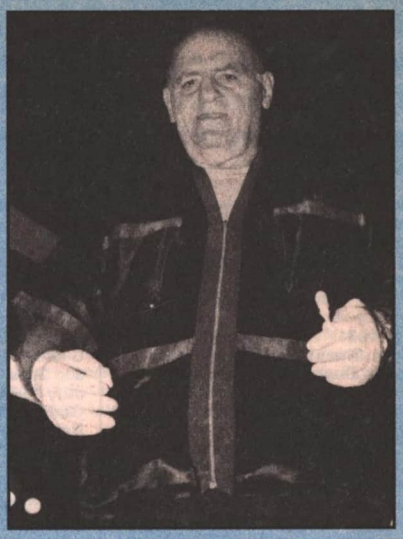
–Lennox Lewis regarding a potential showdown with Mike Tyson

"I'm gonna go to training camp and get in shape, and then I'm gonna fight Mike Tyson in a four-rounder."

–Joe Frazier, 52, at a cocktail party in New York City

OUTSIDE THE ROPES

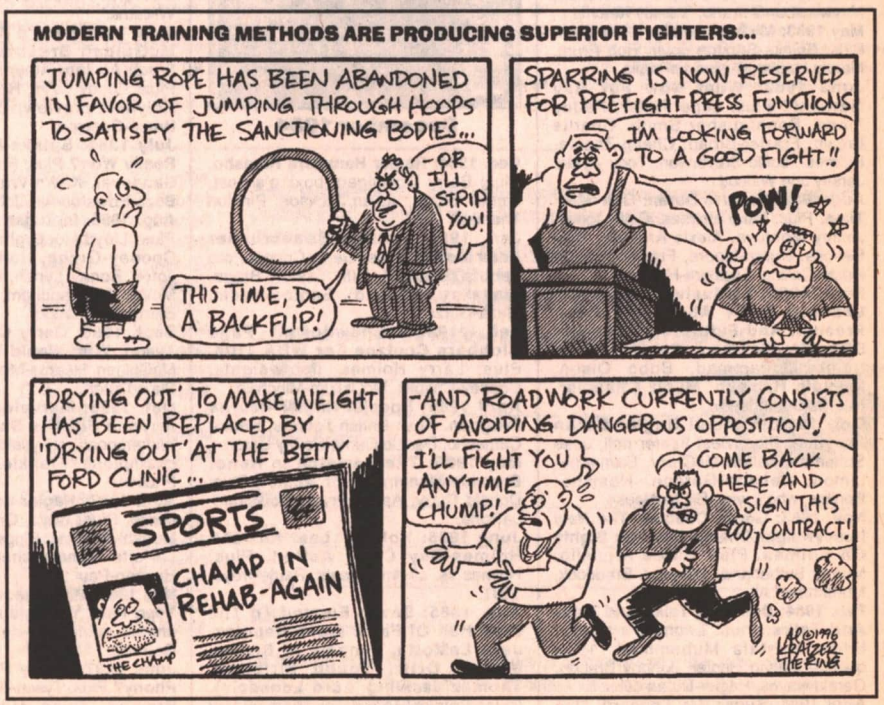
Heavyweight **Peter McNeeley** pleaded guilty in Boston Municipal Court to hitting **Aldo Hernandez** in the face with a beer bottle at a nightspot last year. A judge imposed a suspended six-month sentence, placed McNeeley on probation for one year, and ordered him to be evaluated for an alcohol problem ... In April, **Annie Laura Holyfield**, the mother of former heavyweight champion **Evander Holyfield**, died in Augusta, Georgia, of head injuries and complications from an auto accident in March. She was 68 ... Former welterweight champion **Donald Curry** was sentenced to six months in jail after failing to pay child support for the second time in two months ... After a lengthy illness, former welterweight **Tony Pellone**, 68, died in Brooklyn, New York. Pellone faced, among others, **Kid Gavilan**, **Bob Montgomery**, **Johnny Saxton**, and **Billy Graham** ... Australian featherweight **Lance Hobson**, 23, died from brain injuries suffered in an April bout with China's **Liu Gang** in Melbourne.



Eddie "The Clot" Aliano: 1919-1996

Hobson, who collapsed in the sixth round, underwent surgery to remove a blood clot, but died two days later ... New Jersey-based cutman **Eddie Aliano**, 77, died of lung cancer. "The Clot," a fixture at both championship cards and clubshows throughout the '80s and early-'90s, was considered among the best cutmen in the game.

AL KRATZER'S VIEW



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Oct. 1981: Holmes-Cooney: Is It Is Or Is It Ain't? Plus: Best Fighter, hard-hitting heavyweights, who's who in each division, Donald Curry, Spinks-Muhammad, Chandler-Solis, Snipes-Coetzee, boxing on TV, Rocky Graziano, Sugar Ray Leonard.

Feb. 1982: Special Holmes-Cooney Program Section. Plus: Irish boxers, Sean O'Grady, Ali, Pedroza-Ballas, Braxton-Muhammad, Pedroza-Sibaca, Sanchez-Cowdell, Best of The Ring Anthology.

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May 1983: Michael Spinks Wins It All. Plus: Spinks-Braxton color, Bob Arum, Marvin Hagler, Collins-LaPaglia.

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Sept. 1983: Exclusive: Sugar Ray Leonard Talks About His Past, Present, And Future. Plus: Hagler-Duran, Jaime Garza, Panama Lewis, Spinks-Muhammad, Bobo Olson, Mustafa Hamsho, Muniz-Chandler, Hearns-Sutherland.

Oct. 1983: Special Hagler-Duran Program. Plus: Best fighter poll, Jose Sulaiman, Milton McCrory, Camacho-Limon, DeLeon-Gordon, Hamsho-Benitez, who's who, Bill McNeese.

Nov. 1983: Gerrie Coetzee: The New Heavyweight Champ Sets His Sights On Holmes. Plus: Alexis Arguello, Murray Sutherland, James J. Braddock, Muhammad Ali.

Feb. 1984: Don King Talks And Talks And Talks. Plus: Leonard's return, Eddie Mustafa Muhammad, 1983 quotes, Marvin Hagler, Johnny Bratton, Gerald Hayes, Hagler-Duran color.

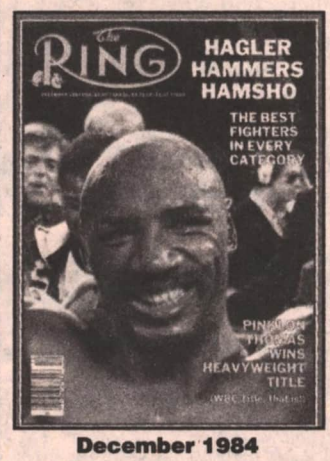
April 1984: Sugar Ray Leonard: "I'm Gonna Be Better Than Ever!" Plus: Ring's ratings of 8,000 fighters, Henry Armstrong, Don Lee, Koji Kobayashi, Mancini-Chacon (color).

June 1984: Bumphus, Lockridge, Duva: 'That Championship Year.' Plus: Ferdie Pacheco, Harry Arroyo, Holmes-Coetzee preview, Pipino Cuevas, Aaron Pryor, Battling Nelson-Joe Gans, Witherspoon-Page.

July 1984: Bazooka's Aim Is True: Gomez Shoots Down LaPorte In The Battle For San Juan. Plus: Michael Spinks, Vinny Pazienza, Tyrone Crawley, Leonard's comeback, Chandler-Sandoval, Hagler-Roldan.

Aug. 1984: Olympic Special: Mark Breland Leads A Strong Squad. Plus: Leonard-Howard, Davila-Sanchez, Bonecrusher-Bruno, Bramble-Mancini, Hatcher-Bumphus, Garza-Orozco.

Oct. 1984: The Beast From The East: John Mugabi Strikes Terror Into The Hearts Of Men. Plus: Olympics, Bill Costello, Davey Moore, Wilfred Benitez, King's heavyweights.



December 1984

Dec. 1984: Hagler Hammers Hamsho. Plus: Barry McGuigan, boxing's best, James Broad, Julian Jackson, Pinklon Thomas.

Jan. 1985: Holmes-Bonecrusher Color Action. Plus: Gerry Cooney, pro debuts (Breland, Hill, Taylor, Biggs, Whitaker, Holyfield), Santos-Medal, Meza-Garza.

Feb. 1985: Showdown: Page Clobbers Coetzee For WBA Title. Plus: Larry Holmes, lightweights, Cooney-Chaplin, McCallum-Minchillo.

April 1985: Special Hagler-Hearns Program. Plus: British fighters, Hector Camacho, Donald Curry, Sonny Liston.

May 1985: The Rematch In Reno: Bramble-Mancini Color Action. Plus: Donald Curry, Aaron Pryor, McGuigan-LaPorte.

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Aug. 1985: Seven Elected To The Ring Hall Of Fame (Jose Napoles, Jake LaMotta, Panama Al Brown, Manuel Ortiz, Young Stribling, Thomas Jackling, Lord Lonsdale). Plus: Spinks-Holmes preview, Barry McGuigan.

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May 1986: Marvelous Marvin Tames The Beast. Plus: Hearns-Shuler, Mike Tyson, Bramble-Crawley, Sandoval-Canizales, Marvin Johnson, McGuigan-Cabrera, Arguello-Costello, Weaver-Williams.

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Ray? Plus: Leonard-Lalonde, Prince Charles Williams, Hearns-Kinchen, Nunn-Roldan, Hines-Hilton.

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	☐ Dec/84	☐ Oct/86	☐ Nov/88	☐ Jun/91	☐ Feb/94
☐ Aug/81	**All 7 $28**	**All 10 $37**	**All 10 $37**	☐ Jul/91	☐ Mar/94
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THE RING RATINGS

For Period Ended May 15, 1996

How Our Ratings Are Compiled

In each division, fighters are ranked according to their abilities and accomplishments.

Being champion does not necessarily mean a fighter will be rated at the top of his weight class.

These ratings reflect how the best fighters in the world rate against one another.

Ratings By The Editors

Records By Fight Fax Inc.

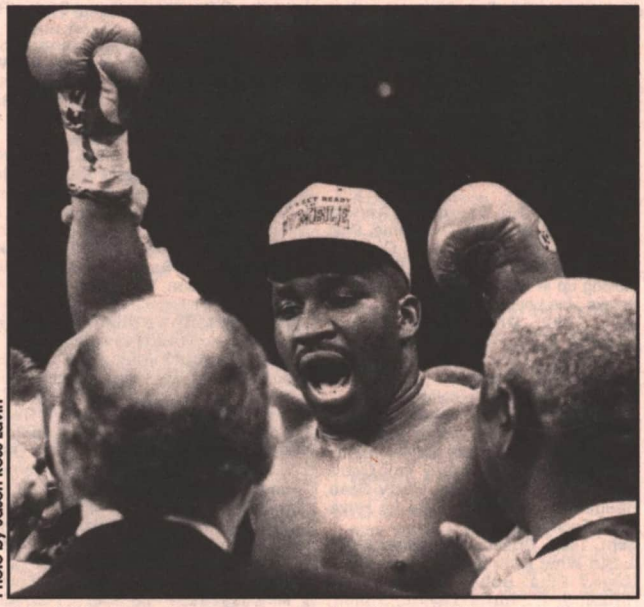


Photo by Jason Ross Lavin

Tim Witherspoon jumped two spots after his kayo of Jorge Luis Gonzalez

HEAVYWEIGHTS
Weight Unlimited

1. **RIDDICK BOWE** Fort Washington, MD *38-1*
2. **MIKE TYSON** Southington, OH *43-1 (WBC Champ)*
3. **LENNOX LEWIS** England *29-1*
4. **MICHAEL MOORER** Detroit, MI *36-1*
5. **EVANDER HOLYFIELD** Atlanta, GA *33-3*
6. **TIM WITHERSPOON** Philadelphia, PA *45-4*
7. **BRUCE SELDON** Atlantic City, NJ *33-3 (WBA Champ)*
8. **ALEXANDR ZOLKIN** Westerville, OH *24-2*
9. **OLIVER McCALL** Chicago, IL *28-6*
10. **HENRY AKINWANDE** England *29-0-1*

CRUISERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 190 pounds

1. **NATE MILLER** Philadelphia, PA *27-4 (WBA Champ)*
2. **AL COLE** Spring Valley, NY *27-2 (IBF Champ)*
3. **ADOLPHO WASHINGTON** Lexington, KY *25-3-2*
4. **MARCELO DOMINGUEZ** Argentina *19-1-1 (WBC Champ)*
5. **JAMES TONEY** Ann Arbor, MI *51-2-2*
6. **TORSTEN MAY** Germany *15-0*
7. **KENNY KEENE** Emmett, ID *32-1*
8. **ALEXANDER GUROV** Ukraine *17-1-1*
9. **CARL THOMPSON** England *19-4*
10. **DAVID IZEQWIRE** Washington, D.C. *19-1*

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS
Weight limit: 175 pounds

1. **HENRY MASKE** Germany *28-0 (IBF Champ)*
2. **VIRGIL HILL** Bismarck, ND *42-1 (WBA Champ)*
3. **FABRICE TIOZZO** France *34-1 (WBC Champ)*
4. **MONTELL GRIFFIN** Chicago, IL *22-0*
5. **DARIUSZ MICHALCZEWSKI** Germany *30-0*
6. **THOMAS HEARNS** Detroit, MI *55-4-1*
7. **MERQUI SOSA** New York, NY *26-5-2*
8. **MIKE McCALLUM** Brooklyn, NY *48-3-1*
9. **WILLIAM GUTHRIE** Philadelphia, PA *20-0*
10. **FRANK TATE** Houston, TX *36-4*

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 168 pounds

1. **ROY JONES** Pensacola, FL *31-0 (IBF Champ)*
2. **SUGARBOY MALINGA** South Africa *41-9 (WBC Champ)*
3. **STEVE COLLINS** Ireland *32-3*
4. **FRANK LILES** N. Hollywood, CA *28-1 (WBA Champ)*
5. **NIGEL BENN** England *42-3-1*
6. **TIM LITTLES** Flint, MI *27-1*
7. **VINNY PAZIENZA** Cranston, RI *40-6*
8. **BRYANT BRANNON** Trenton, NJ *16-0*
9. **HENRY WHARTON** England *23-2-1*
10. **MICHAEL NUNN** Davenport, IA *48-3*

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 160 pounds

1. **BERNARD HOPKINS** Philadelphia, PA *29-2-1 (IBF Champ)*
2. **KEITH HOLMES** Washington, D.C. *28-1 (WBC Champ)*
3. **SHINJI TAKEHARA** Japan *24-0 (WBA Champ)*
4. **JORGE CASTRO** Argentina *99-5-2*
5. **JOHN DAVID JACKSON** Seattle, WA *34-1*
6. **QUINCY TAYLOR** Dallas, TX *26-4*
7. **DANA ROSENBLATT** Malden, MA *28-0*
8. **LONNIE BRADLEY** New York, NY *24-0*
9. **REGGIE JOHNSON** Houston, TX *35-5-1*
10. **JULIAN JACKSON** Virgin Islands *51-4*

JR. MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 154 pounds

1. **TERRY NORRIS**
   Mission Valley, CA *43-6 (WBC/IBF Champ)*
2. **JULIO CESAR VASQUEZ**
   Argentina *56-2 (WBA Champ)*
3. **BRONCO McKART**
   Monroe, MI *28-1*
4. **CARL DANIELS**
   St. Louis, MO *35-2*
5. **YORI BOY CAMPAS**
   Mexico *64-1*
6. **WINKY WRIGHT**
   St. Petersburg, FL *34-1*
7. **LAURENT BOUDOUANI**
   France *30-2*
8. **RAUL MARQUEZ**
   Houston, TX *23-0**
9. **AARON DAVIS**
   Bronx, NY *43-4*
10. **EMMETT LINTON**
    Tacoma, WA *22-2*

WELTERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 147 pounds

1. **PERNELL WHITAKER**
   Norfolk, VA *38-1-1 (WBC Champ)*
2. **FELIX TRINIDAD**
   Puerto Rico *28-0 (IBF Champ)*
3. **IKE QUARTEY**
   Ghana *32-0 (WBA Champ)*
4. **OBA CARR**
   Detroit, MI *37-1*
5. **DERRELL COLEY**
   Capitol Heights, MD *29-1-2*
6. **JOSE LUIS LOPEZ**
   Mexico *36-3-1*
7. **WILFREDO RIVERA**
   Puerto Rico *22-1-1*
8. **HECTOR CAMACHO**
   Orlando, FL *59-3*
9. **PATRICK CHARPENTIER**
   France *21-4*
10. **GARY JACOBS**
    Scotland *43-6*

JR. WELTERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 140 pounds

1. **KOSTYA TSZYU**
   Australia *16-0 (IBF Champ)*
2. **FRANKIE RANDALL**
   Warren, OH *52-4-1*
3. **JULIO CESAR CHAVEZ**
   Mexico *96-1-1 (WBC Champ)*
4. **OSCAR DE LA HOYA**
   Whittier, CA *21-0*
5. **FRED PENDLETON**
   Miami, FL *40-20-4*
6. **MIGUEL ANGEL GONZALEZ**
   Mexico *39-0*
7. **JUAN COGGI**
   Argentina *70-3-2 (WBA Champ)*
8. **CHARLES MURRAY**
   Rochester, NY *36-3*
9. **KHALID RAHILOU**
   France *27-2*
10. **JAN BERGMAN**
    South Africa *31-0*

LIGHTWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 135 pounds

1. **ORZUBEK NAZAROV**
   Japan *23-0 (WBA Champ)*
2. **STEVE JOHNSTON**
   Denver, CO *18-0*
3. **GEORGE SCOTT**
   Pembroke Pines, FL *28-1*
4. **JEAN-BAPTISTE MENDY**
   France *49-5-2 (WBC Champ)*
5. **PHILIP HOLIDAY**
   South Africa *27-0 (IBF Champ)*
6. **SHANE MOSLEY**
   Pomona, CA *19-0*
7. **LEAVANDER JOHNSON**
   Atlantic City, NJ *25-1-1*
8. **JOHN-JOHN MOLINA**
   Puerto Rico *39-4*
9. **ARTUR GRIGORJAN**
   Uzbekistan *19-0*
10. **IVAN ROBINSON**
    Delran, NJ *21-0*

JR. LIGHTWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 130 pounds

1. **AZUMAH NELSON**
   Ghana *38-3-2 (WBC Champ)*
2. **ARTURO GATTI**
   Jersey City, NJ *23-1 (IBF Champ)*
3. **GENARO HERNANDEZ**
   Los Angeles, CA *33-1-1*
4. **TRACY PATTERSON**
   Highland, NY *55-4-1*
5. **GABE RUELAS**
   Arleta, CA *42-3*
6. **JESSE JAMES LEIJA**
   San Antonio, TX *30-2-2*
7. **YONG SOO CHOI**
   South Korea *20-0-3 (WBA Champ)*
8. **REGGIE TUUR**
   Whitestone, NY *41-3-1*
9. **ROBERT GARCIA**
   Oxnard, CA *24-0*
10. **JEFF FENECH**
    Australia *28-2-1*

FEATHERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 126 pounds

1. **TOM JOHNSON**
   Detroit, MI *43-2-1 (IBF Champ)*
2. **LUISITO ESPINOSA**
   Japan *38-7 (WBC Champ)*
3. **NASEEM HAMED**
   England *21-0*
4. **ELOY ROJAS**
   Venezuela *33-1-1 (WBA Champ)*
5. **MANUEL MEDINA**
   Mexico *52-7*
6. **DERRICK GAINER**
   Pensacola, FL *15-3*
7. **KEVIN KELLEY**
   Flushing, NY *44-1-2*
8. **EVER BELENO**
   Colombia *30-2*
9. **CESAR SOTO**
   Mexico *43-6-2*
10. **JUAN MANUEL MARQUEZ**
    Mexico *15-1*

JR. FEATHERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 122 pounds

1. **MARCO ANTONIO BARRERA**
   Mexico *41-0*
2. **DANIEL ZARAGOZA**
   Mexico *52-7-3 (WBC Champ)*
3. **VUYANI BUNGU**
   South Africa *30-2 (IBF Champ)*
4. **KENNEDY McKINNEY**
   Memphis, TN *29-2-1*
5. **ANTONIO CERMENO**
   Venezuela *24-1 (WBA Champ)*
6. **JUNIOR JONES**
   Brooklyn, NY *39-2*
7. **WELCOME NCITA**
   South Africa *37-2*
8. **HECTOR ACERO-SANCHEZ**
   New York, NY *33-3-3*
9. **ERIK MORALES**
   Mexico *22-0*
10. **ORLANDO CANIZALES**
    Laredo, TX *42-3-1*

BANTAMWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 118 pounds

1. **WAYNE McCULLOUGH**
   Las Vegas, NV *19-0 (WBC Champ)*
2. **MBULELO BOTILE**
   South Africa *19-0 (IBF Champ)*
3. **NANA KONADU**
   Ghana *36-2 (WBA Champ)*
4. **ELIECER JULIO**
   Colombia *31-1*
5. **ANCEE GEDEON**
   Westminster, CA *14-8-1*
6. **VEERAPHOL SAHAPROM**
   Thailand *4-1*
7. **ROBBIE REGAN**
   Wales *17-2-3*
8. **PAULIE AYALA**
   Ft. Worth, TX *17-0*
9. **CRUZ CARBAJAL**
   Mexico *13-1-1*
10. **DAORUNG CHUWATANA**
    Thailand *56-5-1*

JR. BANTAMWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 115 pounds

1. **HIROSHI KAWASHIMA**
   Japan *19-2-1 (WBC Champ)*
2. **JOHNNY TAPIA**
   Albuquerque, NM *34-0-2*
3. **DANNY ROMERO**
   Albuquerque, NM *26-1*
4. **ALIMI GOITIA**
   Venezuela *15-0 (WBA Champ)*
5. **HAROLD GREY**
   Colombia *21-1 (IBF Champ)*
6. **GERRY PENALOSA**
   Philippines *31-1-1*
7. **HYUNG CHUL LEE**
   South Korea *19-6*
8. **LUIS BOLANO**
   Colombia *23-0*
9. **POLO SAUCEDO**
   Houston, TX *10-2-1*
10. **SAMSON DUTCH BOY GYM**
    Thailand *14-0*

FLYWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 112 pounds

1. **YURI ARBACHAKOV**
   Japan *22-0 (WBC Champ)*
2. **MARK JOHNSON**
   Washington, D.C. *29-1*
3. **SAEN SOW PLOENCHIT**
   Thailand *25-0 (WBA Champ)*
4. **ALBERTO JIMENEZ**
   Mexico *31-3-2*
5. **ENRIQUE OROZCO**
   Mexico *31-4-1*
6. **CHATCHAI ELITE-GYM**
   Thailand *23-1*
7. **CHOKCHAI 3-K BATTERY**
   Thailand *29-1*
8. **ALEJANDRO MONTIEL**
   Mexico *32-2*
9. **ISAIAS ZAMUDIO**
   Blythe, CA *41-5-1*
10. **DANIEL WARD**
    South Africa *24-6*

JR. FLYWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 108 pounds

1. **SAMAN SORJATURONG**
   Thailand *29-2-1 (WBC Champ)*
2. **CHIQUITA GONZALEZ**
   Mexico *41-3*
3. **MICHAEL CARBAJAL**
   Phoenix, AZ *39-2 (IBF Champ)*
4. **CARLOS MURILLO**
   Panama *31-2 (WBA Champ)*
5. **MELCHOR COB CASTRO**
   Mexico *45-5-4*
6. **JESUS CHONG**
   Mexico *29-7*
7. **BABY JAKE MATLALA**
   South Africa *44-10-2*
8. **HI YONG CHOI**
   South Korea *19-2*
9. **MANUEL JESUS HERRERA**
   Dominican Republic *16-4-1*
10. **SHIRO YAHIRO**
    Japan *22-2-1*

POUND-FOR-POUND

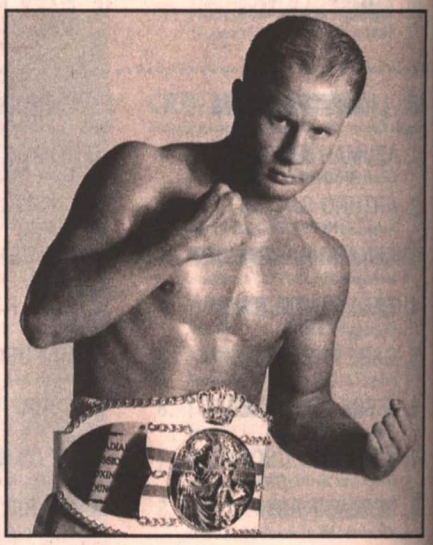
1. **ROY JONES**
   Super Middleweight
2. **PERNELL WHITAKER**
   Welterweight
3. **OSCAR DE LA HOYA**
   Junior Welterweight
4. **FELIX TRINIDAD**
   Welterweight
5. **MARCO ANTONIO BARRERA**
   Junior Featherweight
6. **RICARDO LOPEZ**
   Strawweight
7. **KOSTYA TSZYU**
   Junior Welterweight
8. **RIDDICK BOWE**
   Heavyweight
9. **TERRY NORRIS**
   Junior Middleweight
10. **MIKE TYSON**
    Heavyweight

NEW FACES

BILLY IRWIN

Lightweight

By Warren Tasker



Billy Irwin's got The Look. He's a handsome, blond, blue-eyed banger with a booming left hook.

Question is, can he cook? Can he put all those ingredients into the right recipe for success?

Even his nickname, "The Kid," is non-threatening and appealing. That his skin is white, his demeanor pleasant and easy-going, and his background all-Irish makes him a highly marketable commodity in the United States.

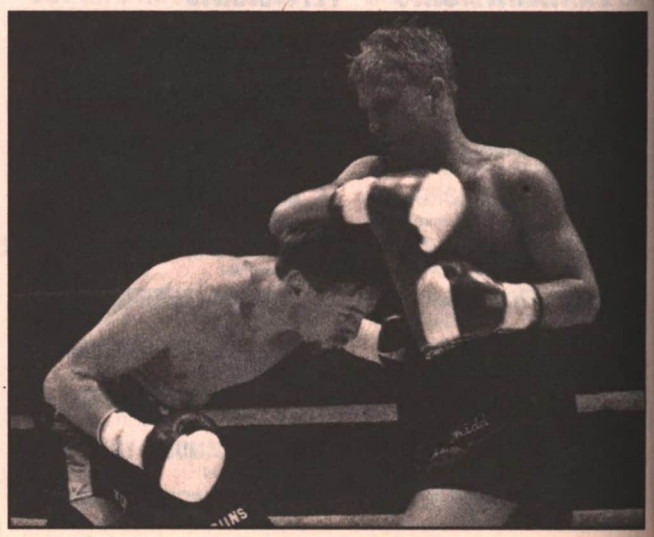
The only problem is that Irwin is a Canadian lightweight fighting out of Canada who doesn't plan on hooking up with the big three of boxing promotion, Don King, Bob Arum, and Dino Duva, any time soon.

"If I was an American, big things would have already happened," says Irwin, who isn't knocking American fighters, but isn't about to abandon his Canadian roots. You get the picture—he's his own man.

Except for a few bright spots—Kirk Johnson, Dale Brown, and especially Arturo Gatti—professional boxing in the Great White North is almost comatose. Lennox Lewis, who fought for Canada as an amateur, but turned his coat to fight as a pro for Great Britain, doesn't count.

Hopes are pinned on heavyweight Johnson, cruiserweight Brown, world junior lightweight champion Gatti, and Irwin. And Billy the Kid is the one who has the best chance of throwing his line in and catching on in the American mainstream on his own

(Continued on page 59)



Irwin lets fly vs. John Gottchling

PRO RECORD

1993		
Feb. 11	Charles McClelland, Niagara Falls, Ontario	KO 1
March 26	John Gottchling, Toronto	KO 1
April 14	Cliff Hicks, Toronto	W 6
June 12	Ben Simmons, Pittsburgh	KO 5
Oct. 2	Brent Mitchell, Edmonton	KO 2
Dec. 9	Desi Ford, Toronto	W 6
1994		
April 13	Charles Beals, Toronto	KO 2
June 8	Nedrick Simmons, Niagara Falls	KO 8
Aug. 11	Manny Santiago, Malden, MA	W 8
Oct. 27	Steve Thomas, Toronto	KO 1
Dec. 9	Stan Cunningham, Edmonton	KO 4
1995		
Jan. 11	Alexis Perez, Toronto	KO 1
Feb. 24	Bobby Johnson, Montreal	KO 1
April 28	Rodney Wilson, Edmonton	KO 6
June 8	Amado Cabato, Toronto	W 12
Sept. 28	Jesus Rodriguez, Toronto	W 12
1996		
Jan. 25	Juan Sanchez, Toronto	W 10
March 30	Manuel Billalba, Buenos Aires	KO 8

FIGHTS	WON	LOST	DREW	KO
18	18	0	0	12

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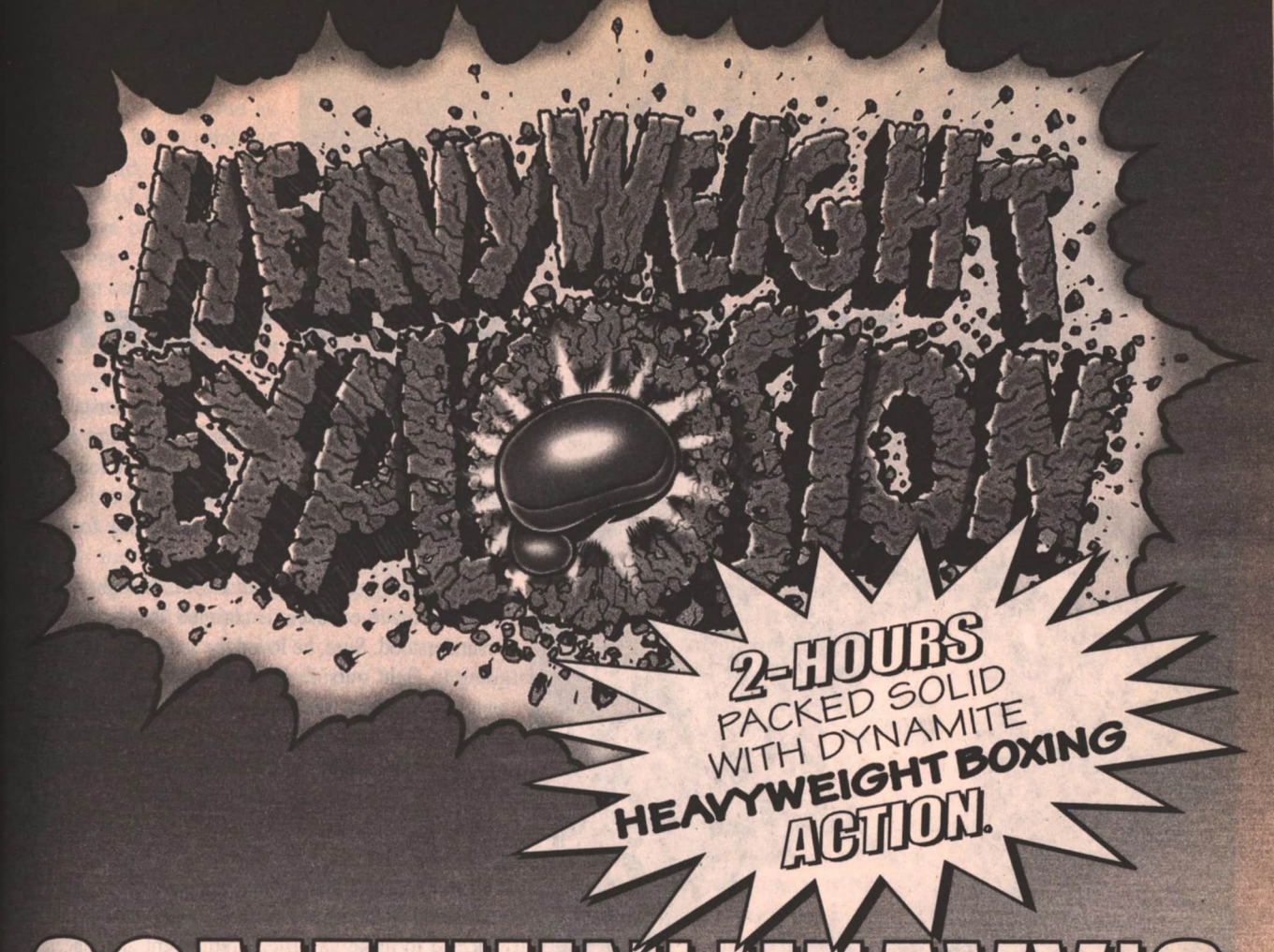

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RYAN OUT LOUD

By Jeff Ryan

THE TRY OF THE TIGER

If anybody ever had trouble taking Tony "The Tiger" Lopez seriously, that was understandable. He wore tiger-striped trunks and shoes, talked smack, spent as much time in nightclubs as fight clubs, bungee-jumped in his spare time, and was reluctant to leave his home turf for so long that it wasn't clear whether he was on a mission to become a world champion or the punching poster boy for agoraphobia.

Tony Lopez, ready to retire after a 13-year career, will be remembered not only for his championship fights, but for the spirit he displayed in and out of the ring.

The refreshing thing about Lopez, though, was that he never made excuses or claimed that he had been misunderstood. Sure, he loved the ladies. No, he wasn't going to fight outside of Sacramento, California, as long as the money was great at home and the electrified crowd was worth a few rounds on the scorecards. And, well, yeah, he could have walked away from some of those out-of-the-ring altercations, but *chose* not to do so. Lopez' mouth, interviewers learned, was a blunt instrument.

The Tiger has been on my mind lately because he is saying that his days of fighting for pay are over. He is expected to make an official retirement announcement during the summer at the California State Capitol Building in Sacramento. As was the case when he began as a pro in 1983, Lopez will probably conclude his career with everyone in Sacramento talking about him—and everyone outside of Northern California unaware that any kind of fuss is being made at all.

That's too bad, for Lopez deserves to be cheered by more than just his family, his friends, and the locals in his hometown. He was no all-time great, and there won't be a place reserved for him in the minds of historians or on the wall of that no-frills Hall of Fame in Canastota, New York. But as he rides his Harley into the sunset, he should be remembered as more than just another interchangeable champion in the alphabet-soup cauldron or another sartorial screwball schticking his neck out for attention.

What made Lopez one of my favorite fighters of the past decade were all those traits that so many other boxers lack, but that came naturally to him. Honesty. Intelligence. Wit. Self-deprecating humor. A zest for living. Flair. Showmanship. Dramatic timing. In a sport too often paralyzed by politics and scarred by scandal, he appeared to be genuinely having fun just about all of the time.

Consequently, his fights were fun to watch, his interviews fun to listen to, his late nights out fun to envision, and his antics fun to poke fun at. He took some hits in print, but responded with good-natured put-downs of his own, not angry phone calls to writers and editors. His skin was thicker than canvas.

Unfortunately, the skin around his eyes wasn't. He cut easily enough to be bothered in many fights by the feel of blood trickling down his face. He could box or brawl, but because he wasn't smooth enough to dominate solely with a jab and movement, and didn't possess the crunching power to steamroll opponents, he usually had to combine technique and tenacity to be at his very best. And he was at his best plenty of times when it counted.

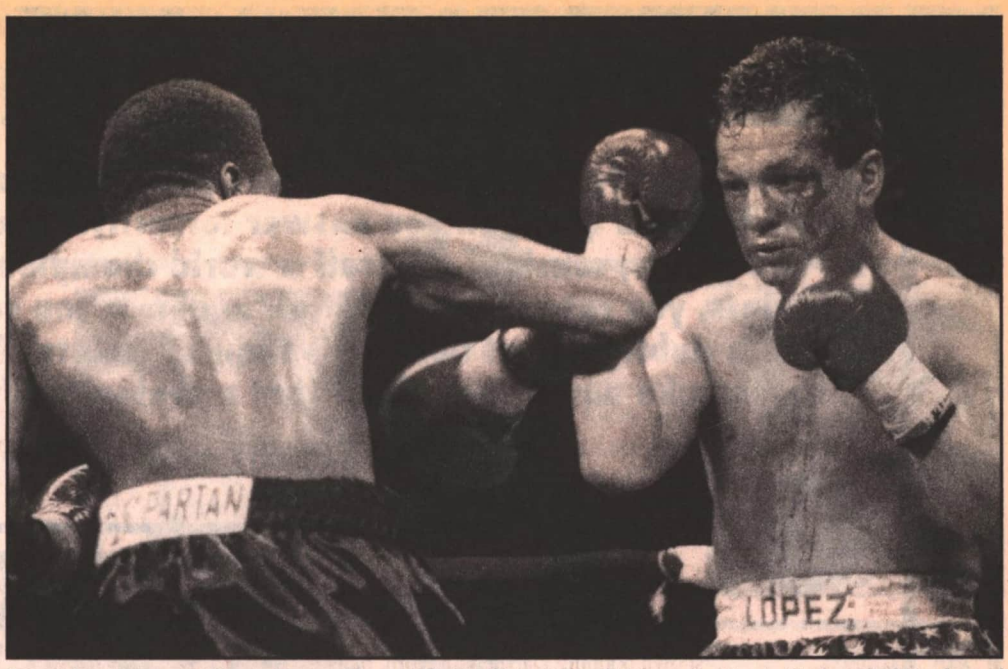


Photo by Pat Orr

Lopez' last bout was a bloody 12-round loss to Charles "The Natural" Murray in March. He described his physical decline as "just like the way the old fighters always describe it."

Unlike a Vinny Pazienza or Joey Gamache, Lopez wasn't more talk and show than substance. He fought plenty of guys who had been champions at one time or another and beat many of them: Rocky Lockridge, John-John Molina, Jorge Paez, Dingaan Thobela, Greg Haugen. When he got tired of being labeled a homebody who wouldn't leave the friendly confines of Arco Arena, he started campaigning in his rivals' backyards. He went to Gamache's home state of Maine and won by knockout. In two of his most recent defeats, he challenged Julio Cesar Chavez in Mexico and Charles Murray in Rochester, New York. Lopez won the IBF junior lightweight crown twice, and the WBA lightweight belt once.

"How do I want to be remembered?" he said to me in May. "I don't ask for a lot. I wasn't Mike Tyson. But remember me for one thing: I never took an easy fight. There weren't many unrated guys on my record, but there were lots of number-one contenders."

It was during the decision defeat to Murray in March that Lopez decided he'd had enough of boxing.

"[In a '95 kayo loss to Freddie Pendleton] I was kind of in denial," says the 33-year-old Lopez. "I thought I was slow, but that maybe it was the way I trained. But when I got cut in the Murray fight, I said, 'I'm tired of this s___.' I was seeing openings, but by the time I swung, he was gone. Just like the way the old fighters always describe it."

Does Lopez think his decline was the result of the toe-to-toe exchanges or the mouth-to-mouth ones? Too many big clashes or too many big bashes?

"I went out dancing the night away for a long time," he says, "and I'm sure it didn't help. But I think age had more to do with this than anything else."

I have known Lopez since shortly after he won his first title by defeating Lockridge in '88. To be honest, thoughts of him without boxing in his life worry me a little. But not for the usual reasons.

He has plenty of money, and one investment guarantees him $4.8-million when he turns 55. He also has plenty to do to keep him busy. His hobby has always been to buy old cars and old houses and restore them to their original condition; he loves water sports; he is on the verge of getting his real estate license; and, like so many fighters, he is taking a shot at acting. His first role is a non-speaking part in the upcoming John Travolta film, *Phenomenon.* Lopez plays a migrant farm worker.

"Hey, do you think I fit the description?" he asks.

The Tiger has also settled down. He has been living with his girlfriend, model Carol Rhines, for two years. (Two *weeks* used to be a long-term relationship for Lopez.) And the couple has a baby daughter, Tatiana. So why the concern? Well, Lopez keeps telling me that although boxing is out of his system, fighting isn't, and he says it won't be very hard for some crackpot to provoke him. Though he is as mild-mannered an athlete as you'll ever meet, he says he isn't about to back down from anyone. He had one brawl a few months ago at a Sacramento nightspot, and as he talks, one can't help but think of that scene in *Rocky V,* when Rocky Balboa tells Tommy Gunn, *"My* ring is outside."

Hopefully, Lopez won't do anything dumb. And, hopefully, he won't change his mind when it's time to make his retirement official. The setting for his farewell, though, seems odd. Wouldn't a more appropriate site be Arco, the home court of the Sacramento Kings and boxing's Sacramento king?

"Or, if not there, maybe an Arco service station," says Lopez. "After we finished, we could film a commercial with me pumping gas. Everybody who watched it would say, 'There's Lopez in retirement. He *still* couldn't get away from Arco.'"

Better an Arco commercial than one for Exxon. After the kind of effort Lopez gave in the ring for 13 years, nobody would ever associate him with a Tiger in the tank. ■

THE RING'S EXCLUSIVE

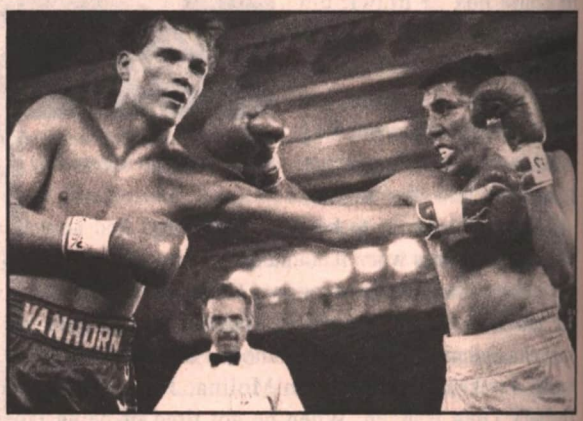
PHOTO QUIZ TEST

Can you identify the fighters in these photos? Award yourself 10 points for each question you answer correctly. If you score a total of 90-100 points, consider yourself a world champion. If you score 70-80 points, you rate as a top-10 contender. If you score 50-60 points, you're a clubfighter at best. Less than 50 points? Eat another piece of cheesecake and forget about that morning roadwork.

THIS MONTH: THE FIGHTERS OF ITALY

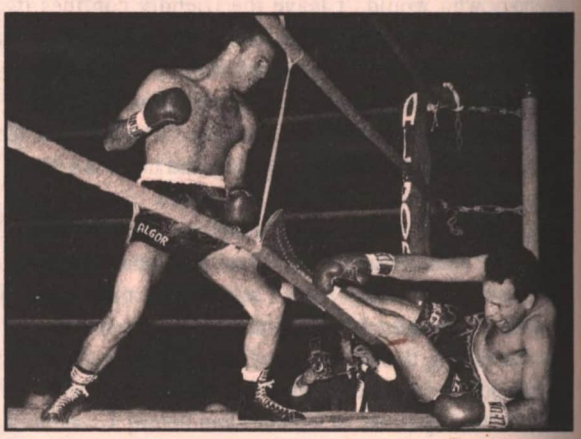
1

This long-reigning world champion, shown bopping Darrin Van Horn, hails from the chocolate capital of Perugia.



2

New Orleans' Ralph Dupas is on the floor and this 154-pounder from Pontedera is about to win a world title.



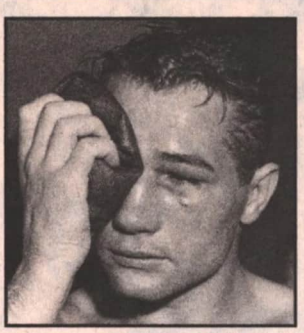
3

Frequently featured on network television in the early-'80s, this Mali-born welterweight, shown outpointing Jerry Cheatham, turned out to be more style than substance.

YOUR BOXING IQ

4

This middleweight from Trieste received an unexpected shot at the world title, but all he got for his efforts was a headache, courtesy of an Italian-American champion.

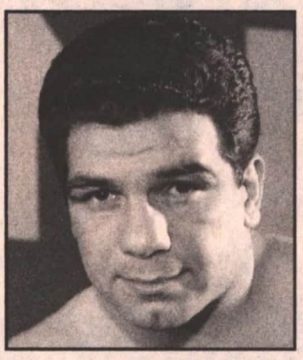


5

A Dapper Dan indeed, this world champion from Sciacca, whose real name was Giuseppe Carrora, was one of boxing's earliest two-division titlists.

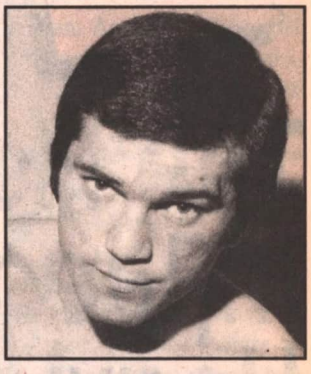
6

Another world titlist from Trieste, this featherfisted 140-pounder lost only three of 126 career bouts.



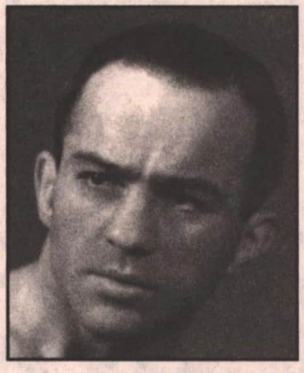
7

A native of Ripa Teatine, this pure puncher, who remained active into the '80s, fought out of Australia.



8

Briefly a world champion in the '50s, this tough slugger from Arezzo holds a distinction: He's the only deaf-mute titlist in history.

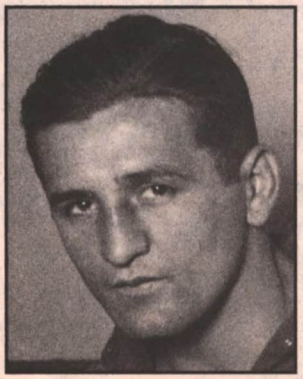


9

This favorite son of Naples scored a rare double—he won an Olympic gold medal and a world title. Both came in the '80s.

10

A California-based welterweight from Protenza, this champion, real name Raffaele Capabianca Giordano, held the title for only three months.



ANSWERS:

1) Gianfranco Rosi
2) Sandro Mazzinghi
3) Nino LaRocca
4) Tiberio Mitri
5) Johnny Dundee
6) Duilio Loi
7) Rocky Mattioli
8) Mario D'Agata
9) Patrizio Oliva
10) Young Corbett III

ROCKY TURNS 20

The Most Influential Heavyweight Of Our Generation

By Pete Ehrmann

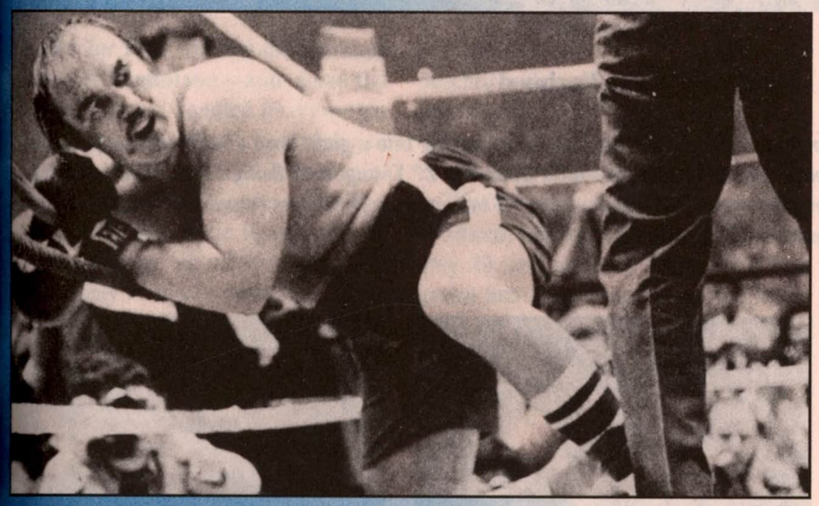
It's a good thing for Vinny Pazienza that 20 years ago, Sylvester Stallone didn't follow through on his original brainstorm and write a movie about a taxi cab driver who becomes mayor of Philadelphia. Or, as *Newsweek* reported, another one about "a rock star whose career collapses because of an overwhelming craving for bananas."

Those ideas, and such screenplays as *The Monster Of Manchester* and *The Ballad Of Butcher Bloom,* all came from the imagination of the man who had repeatedly flunked high school English and used the literary pseudonym Q. Moonblood. And whose twin careers as screenwriter and actor were moving along about as well as a one-legged man doing the Ali Shuffle.

Then the 30-year-old Stallone, described in one article as "a sturdy package of muscle with black hair and a handsome Italian face that looks like it is controlled by an IQ of 80," sat in a movie theater on March 24, 1975, and watched on closed-circuit TV as the arrogant and talented heavyweight champion of the world, Muhammad Ali, took on a 10-1 underdog named Chuck Wepner.

Stallone, Hollywood, and the sport of boxing were about to change in ways even less predictable than a Frans Botha urine test.

From bell to bell, the fight scenes in Rocky *were particularly intense. When southpaw challenger Rocky Balboa first met heavyweight champion Apollo Creed, there wasn't much of a feeling-out process.*



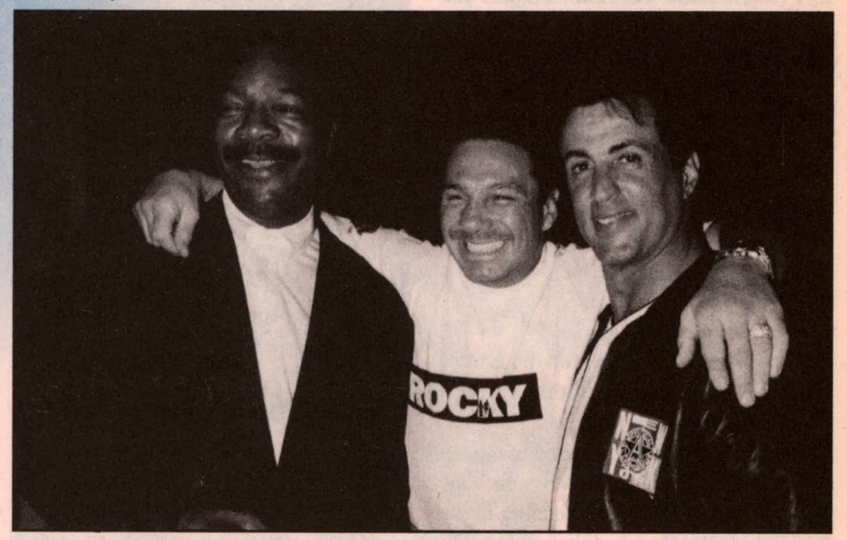
Badly outgunned but as brave as a fighter could be, huge underdog Chuck Wepner lasted until the 15th round of his March 1975 challenge of heavyweight champion Muhammad Ali. It was Wepner's gutty performance that inspired Sylvester Stallone to write Rocky.

Was it really 20 years ago that we first met Rocky, Adrian, Apollo, Mickey, and Paulie in what surely is the best-known, and arguably best-crafted, fight movie of all-time?

From its opening scene of hopeless ham-and-egger Rocky Balboa fighting under the Jesus mural in the Resurrection Athletic Club, to the inspired southpaw going the distance against heavyweight champion Apollo Creed, *Rocky,* winner of the Academy Award for Best Picture of 1976, held audiences enthralled and had them actually on their feet cheering in movie houses.

Which they wouldn't have done had the film ended the way Stallone's first draft of

(Continued on page 60)



Real life meets reel life: Vinny Pazienza, who credits Rocky *for inspiring him to become a boxer, celebrates the movie's 20th anniversary with Carl Weathers and Sylvester Stallone.*

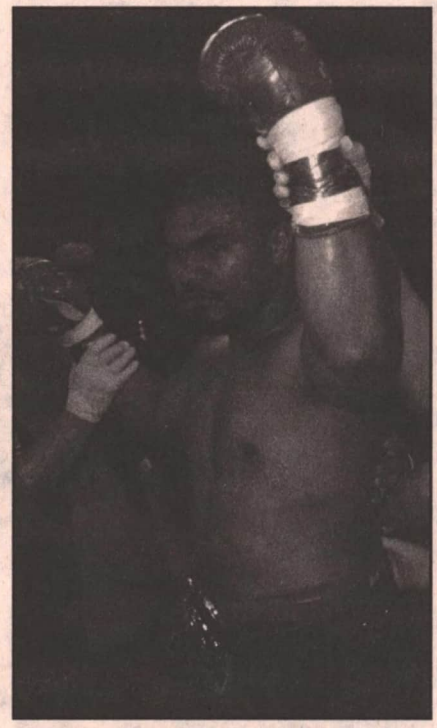
The Young & The Restless HEAVYWEIGHT HOPEFULS FROM A TO Z

By Steve Farhood

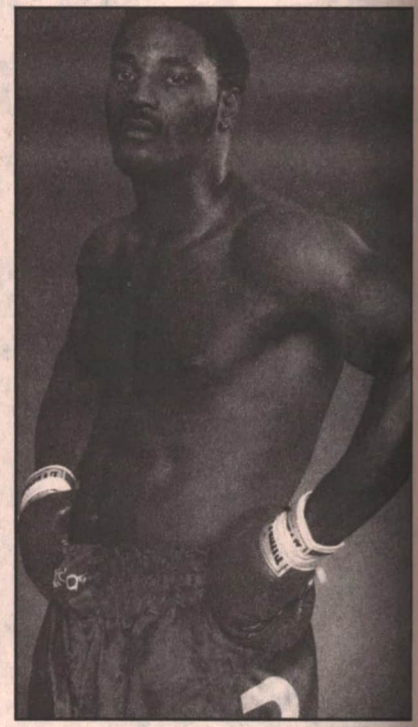
The proliferation of world titles and sanctioning organizations has turned boxing into a giant bowl of alphabet soup. How better, then, to informally analyze the heavyweights of tomorrow than from A to Z? Young turks being as mercurial as they are, it's difficult to firmly draw conclusions. But we're sure of one thing: If boxing were the bonus round of Wheel Of Fortune, *every young heavyweight would choose the same five letters—T, Y, S, O, and N.*

A is for Apple, as in Big, or as in Choke, both of which apply to New York City's heavily hyped **Shannon Briggs**. In March, Briggs, who *looks* like a future world champion, didn't fight like one, suffering an upset third-round kayo at the hands of Darroll Wilson. Trainer Teddy Atlas subsequently broke up with Briggs, 25-1 (20), because "he wasn't a fighter yet, and he had already found a level of comfort and success." Added Atlas, "I took him in a room one day and explained it to him. He had three guys living in his house. One guy scrambled his eggs for him and another drove him around. And when he dropped his underwear on the floor, the third guy picked it up."

But was the same guy there to pick up *Briggs* after *he* was dropped?



David Tua



Jo-el Scott

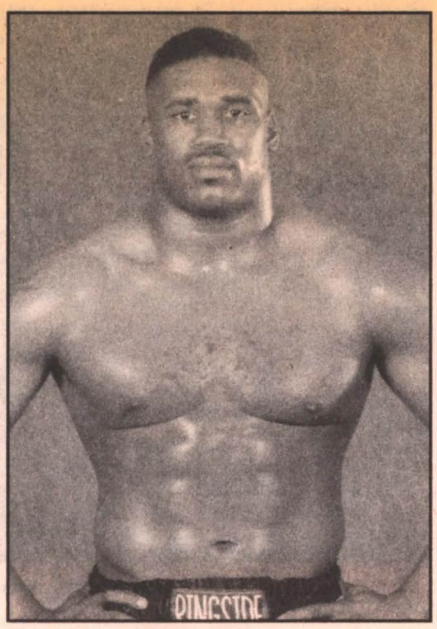
B is for Bean, but not the Butter variety. We're talking about **Vaughn Bean**, who, given the level of his competition, has inexplicably been rated in the top 10 of both the IBF and the WBA. In May, Bean kayoed one Michael Benning in the first round. Benning hadn't fought since *1981!* Bean, a 22-year-old Chicagoan, 24-0 (18), is promoted by Butch Lewis, who knows how to move a heavyweight. In this case, he's moving him very slowly. "He's a strong boxer-puncher who comes right at you," said Lewis, "but he's still green. I'll be turning him loose in 10 or 12 months." One thing Bean has going for him: He's being tutored part-time by Michael Spinks.

B is also for New York City's **Bell**, first name **Gary**, 9-0 (6), who's worth watching because some of his kayos have been of the did-you-see-that? variety.

C is for Courage, the best fighter's first name we've heard in years. The last name is **Tshabalala**, which, we think, is a lyric to a song by The Carpenters. Courage, 16-0 (13), fights for Main Events, and their matchmaking suggests they realize just how raw he is. The press releases say that as an amateur in his native South Africa, Courage went 70-1, *with 70 first-round kayos!* Sorry, guys, but you're not allowed to count shadowboxing sessions. In May, Tshabalala was lucky to edge .500 fighter Tim Noble by eight-round split decision. Raw indeed.

D is for Doc, which is the nickname of **Danell Nicholson**—and what the Emanuel Steward-handled heavyweight needed after his March kayo loss to Andrew Golota. To use a basketball term, Nicholson, 24-2 (18), once a Chicago hoops star, is *soft*. Some fighters can be counted on to get up off the floor. Doc does that only when he's dunking.

E is for Eric Esch, 20-1 (16), who you know better as **Butterbean**. Everyone's favorite baldie is the self-proclaimed "King Of The Four-Rounders." That's all fine and dandy, but isn't it gonna look a bit funny when, with a record of 54-1, he's matched with some bouncer from Hooters who's 2-6-1?



Alonzo Highsmith

F is for Fast Finishes, which is an indirect way to introduce **Jeremy Williams**, 25-1 (22). The Californian is only 23, and at 6'2", 220 pounds, he's grown into a legitimate heavyweight. As for the fast finishes, in March, Williams kayoed Arthur Weathers in 10 seconds! Give this guy Ray Mercer's chin and he'd be the best of the lot.

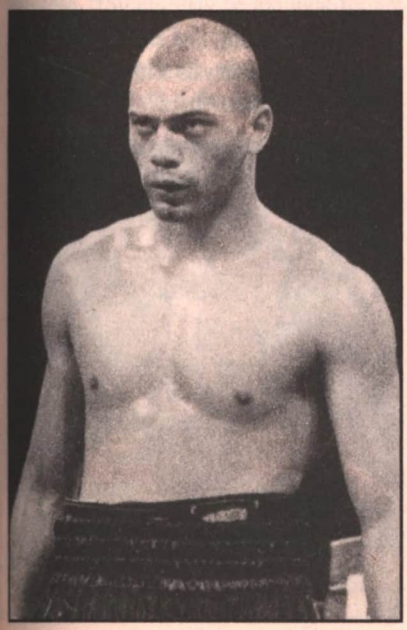
G is for Grimsley, first name **Crawford**, the best blond, muscular, bilingual (English and Spanish) heavyweight in South Florida. Grimsley, 20-0 (18), was recently signed by Don King, so he'll get a big fight somewhere along the line. He's a former martial artist who can crack with his right hand, but his opponents have all been of the collapsible variety.

G is also for Grant, first name **Michael**, a 6'7", 245-pound project managed by Bill Cayton. Grant, 18-0 (14), is described by Top Rank matchmaker Ron Katz as "a big, strong kid who can punch. He's got a lot of raw potential—if they can mold him."

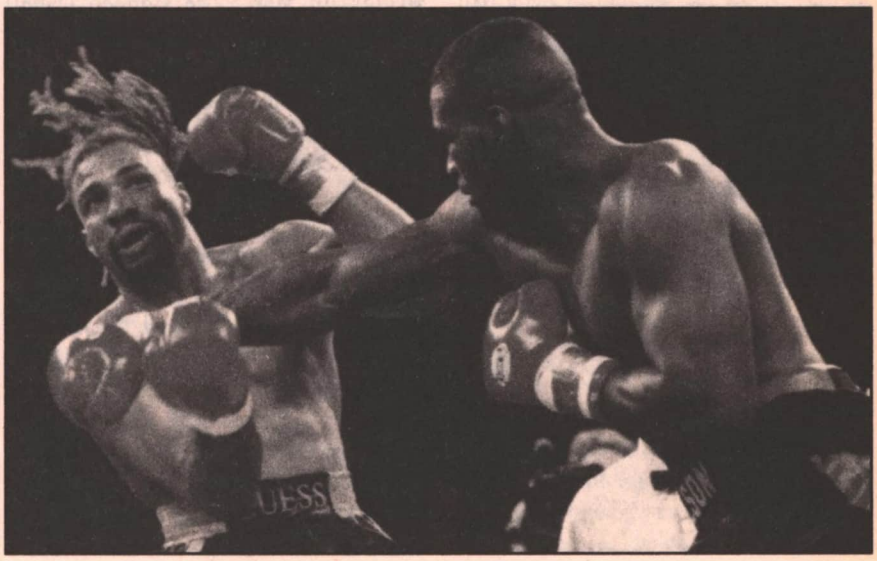
H is for Highsmith, first name **Alonzo**. Once an NFL running back, the injury jinx cost him his football career. And the talent jinx will ultimately cost him his boxing career. He's 9-0-1 (7), and pumps a serious jab, but he's still more likely to give you eight yards than eight rounds.

I is for Izonritei, first name **David**. The Frenchman, 17-1 (15), was a prospect until March, when he dropped a decision to Maurice Harris, a sub-.500 fighter who had lost three straight by kayo. *C'est la vie.*

J is for Johnson, first name **Kirk**, who is 18-0 (13), and quietly developing. The 23-year-old Canadian, a 1992 Olympian, has overcome managerial difficulties, and, according to matchmaker Katz, "may be the sleeper of the bunch. His technique is exceptional, and by the end of '96, he should be in contention." The only question mark is his chin.



Jeremy Williams



Darroll Wilson kayos Shannon Briggs

K is for Kansas City, Kansas, where **Greg Suttington**, 13-0 (12), has been hiding. To paraphrase what they used to say about Marvin Hagler, the 1990 National Golden Gloves champion (at 201 pounds) has four things going against him: He's black, he's short, he's a puncher, and he's a southpaw. At 5'10½" and 220 pounds, Suttington fights with a predictable style. His opposition has been poor, but co-manager Peyton Sher says, "He knocked Wimpy Halstead dead in the second round." Hey, somebody had to do it.

L is for the Luck of the Irish, which will be needed by **Kevin McBride**, 16-0-1 (13), a 1992 Olympian from Ireland. The 23-year-old behemoth is 6'6", 240 pounds, but he's terribly slow of hand and foot. Moreover, he seems to have a career death wish; early on, he split with powerful promoter Frank Warren, and more recently, he broke from well-connected manager Frank Maloney, who wanted to replace the fighter's longtime trainer, Frank Mulligan. Doesn't McBride know loyalty has no place in the fight business?

M is for McNeeley, first name **Peter**. We haven't heard much from "The Irish Hurricane," 39-2 (33), since his date with Mike Tyson, but then again, $600,000 buys a lot of Pizza Hut and beer.

N is for Nunn, first name **Michael**, who isn't a heavyweight at all. But he's been reincarnated as **Chris Byrd**, a 1992 Olympic silver medalist, and the type of quick-footed southpaw no one wants to fight. Byrd, 17-0 (11), has filled out to 6'2", 220 pounds. He's beaten Phil Jackson and Lionel Butler, and, says HBO's Lou DiBella, "He's someone we're looking at. He's been very, very impressive."

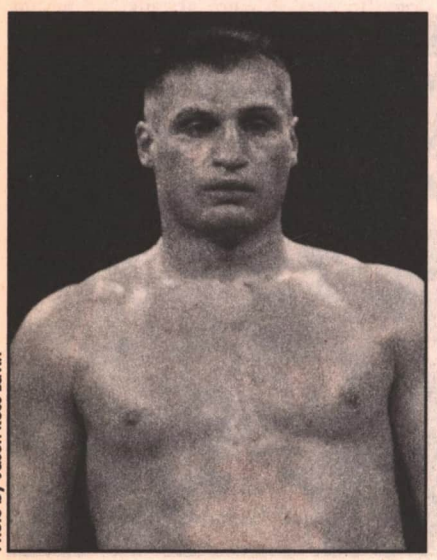


Photo by Jason Ross Lavin

Andrew Golota

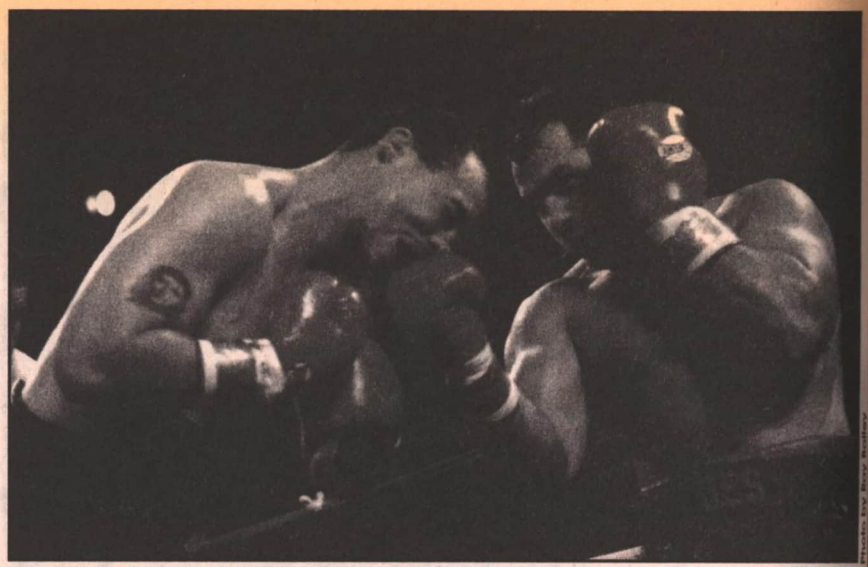


Photo by Ray Mallory

Jorge Valdes punishes Herman Delgado

O is for Obed Sullivan, 17-1-1 (12), and, following his four-round no-contest with Buster Mathis Jr. in April, the prospect *du jour*. Sullivan is as tough as his Marine background would suggest. He's green, but mean, and, according to DiBella, "reminds me of Ray Mercer. He's the kind of guy others duck."

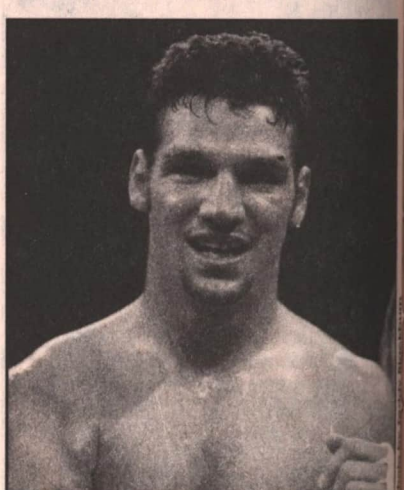
P is for Poland, a place **Andrew Golota** isn't likely to visit soon. The hulk of a heavyweight left his homeland in 1991, and has made major strides fighting for Main Events. In March, he stopped Danell Nicholson, which earned him a scheduled July date with Riddick Bowe. Golota, 28-0 (25), is slow, but he can punch, and he features an underrated jab. Moreover, he fights *angry*, a characteristic you gotta love in a heavyweight.

Q is for Quinn, first name **Thomas**. This Philadelphia heavyweight is 7-4 (5), and he's not really a prospect at all. But what else are we supposed to do with the letter Q? We suppose there's always Quinn Navarre, but when your only credential is losing a close one to Larry Holmes ...

R is for Records, such as 34-0 (28), which are the meaningless numbers carried by **Lou Savarese**. Big Lou is 30, and he's been milking the prospect tag for the entire decade. He was supposed to fight George Foreman. He was supposed to fight Mike Tyson. And most recently, he was supposed to fight Buster Mathis Jr. on HBO, but engaged in a bout with bronchitis instead. "In order to get back on HBO," said DiBella, "he needs a good win." None of Savarese's 34 triumphs qualifies. He's big, tall, and good-looking, but the prevailing wisdom is that he can't fight even a little bit. Someday we'll find out for sure.

R is also for Rahman, first name **Hasim**, 13-0 (12), a 23-year-old heavyweight from Baltimore who can bang. A recent win over trialhorse Ross Purrity suggests a hopeful future.

S is for Smith, first name **Peter**. What's a heavyweight analysis without at least one entry from South Africa? The 25-year-old



Lou Savarese

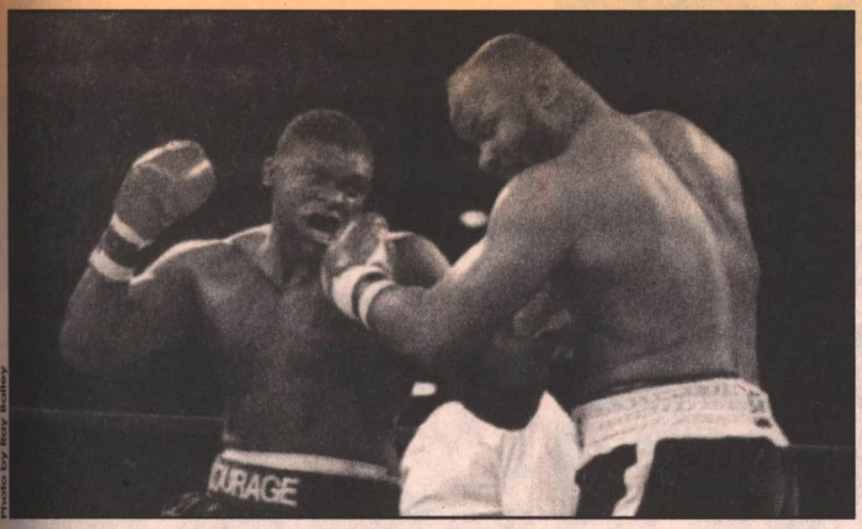


Photo by Ray Bailey

Courage Tshabalala guns down Ken Myers

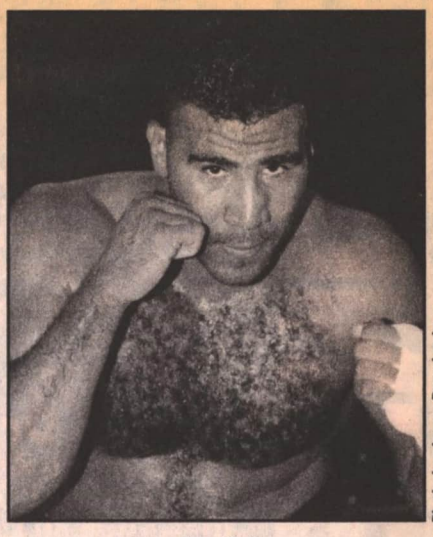
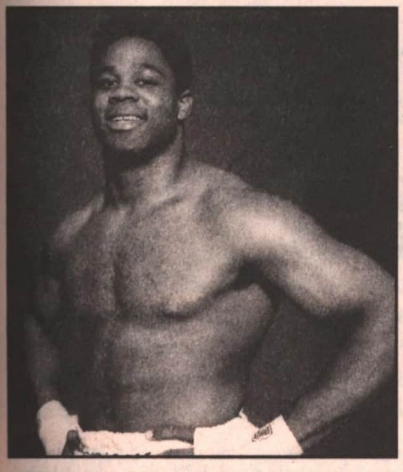


Photo by Jason Ross Lavin

Gary Bell



Kirk Johnson

Smith is 17-0 (10). Says Gavin Evans, who keeps a close eye on the South African boxing scene, "[Smith] may be too light for the best of the big men."

S is also for Syria, which is the homeland of 23-year-old **Aahmad Abdin**, 20-0-3 (7), who fights out of Texas. Despite a recent kayo of the respectable Derrick Roddy, Abdin lacks speed and strength. Just wondering: Has anyone seen this guy and Mustafa Hamsho at the same time?

T is for Tua, first name **David**, the Samoan who was last seen throwin' a back-alley left hook that finished John Ruiz at the 19-second mark of the first round. Tua, 23-0 (19), is a Tyson wannabe. He stands only 5'10" and weighs 225 pounds. He hasn't yet progressed as far as stablemate Andrew Golota, but a matchup later this year with Darroll Wilson could help. The Ruiz fight aside, we've never been real high on this guy. Too small, too limited.

U is for the U.S. Olympic team. Every four years brings a new crop of heavyweights, and we can only hope that 1996 produces someone more exciting than Larry Donald. Our super heavyweight entry in Atlanta will be *30*-year-old corrections officer Lawrence Clay-Bey. Our 201-pounder is the inexperienced Nate Jones. Double-ugh. Maybe somebody will emerge from Team Zimbabwe.

V is for Valdes, first name **Jorge**, who hails from Florida, via Cuba, via Spain. The 5'11", 220-pounder is 19-1-2 (13). His breakthrough fight was a 1995 decision over Nate Tubbs. Hey, you have to start somewhere. (As we went to press, Valdes was scheduled to face 1992 Olympian Larry Donald.) "He's a fearless former bodybuilder," said co-manager Arnie Rosenthal. "He fights like a combination Mike Tyson-Rocky Marciano." Told you he was short.

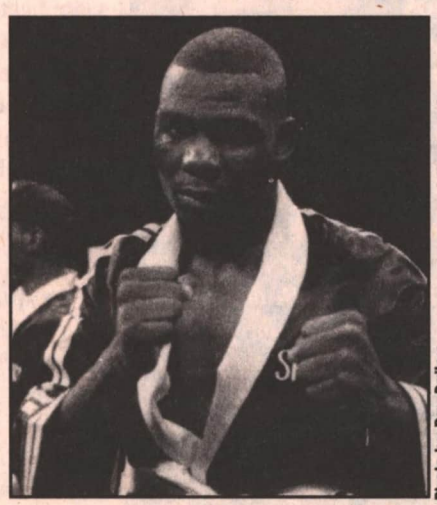


Photo by Ray Bailey

Hasim Rahman

W is for Wilson, first name **Darroll**, who, with wins over James Stanton and Shannon Briggs, boasts of decent credentials. Still, this 29-year-old converted southpaw from Atlantic City fails to excite us. Wilson, 16-0-2 (11), isn't real big, and the Briggs kayo aside, he doesn't seem a puncher.

X is for the X-Factor, Jo-el Scott, 16-0 (16), who is the most highly touted prospect in the division. The native of Albany, New York, has size (6'2", 235 pounds), skills, and crushing power. Legal problems, however, have slowed his progress. Women don't only weaken legs, they can ruin careers.

Y is for Youth, which is one thing Danish heavyweight **Brian Nielsen** doesn't have going for him. Nielsen, 27-0 (15), is 31, but in a division that includes fortysomethings like Larry Holmes and George Foreman and fiftysomethings like Earnie Shavers and Ron Lyle, he's still in diapers. Will he turn out to be a great Dane or just another dog? Nielsen's big (250 pounds), and he's beaten Tony Tubbs and Phil Jackson, but he was considered as an opponent for Foreman, which tells you all you need to know.

Z is for Zeljko Mavrovic, 22-0 (17), a Croatian-born banger who, since losing to Danell Nicholson in the 1992 Olympics, has developed into a hot-dogging, tomahawk-coiffed, intriguing heavyweight. He's also the European champion, but we don't hold that against him. ■

BATTLE of the LEGENDS

Lightweight

Fight fans will forever debate the merits of champions who never met in the ring. In "Battle of the Legends," the editors of THE RING play matchmaker and pit two of the all-time greats against each other. Three experts serve as judges. If there are particular dream matches that you'd like to see featured, write to us.

Carlos Ortiz

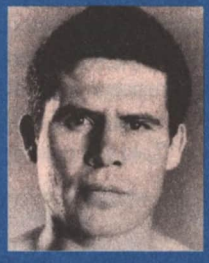
Ponce, Puerto Rico
Career: 1955-1972
61-7-1 with 30 kayos (1 no-contest)

At his best, the New York City-raised Ortiz was the quintessential boxer-puncher. At his best, he effortlessly adapted to his opponent's style. He lacked discipline, however, and a drinking problem affected more than one of his big-fight performances.

The 5'7½" Ortiz, a hall of famer, won the vacant junior welterweight title in 1959 before dropping down and claiming the lightweight throne for the first time by outpointing Joe Brown in 1962. What followed were nine successful defenses over two reigns. Ortiz won two of three vs. Ismael Laguna, twice stopped both Flash Elorde and Sugar Ramos, and defeated Duilio Loi and Kenny Lane. He lost the title to Teo Cruz in 1968, and retired after a 1972 defeat at the hands of Ken Buchanan.

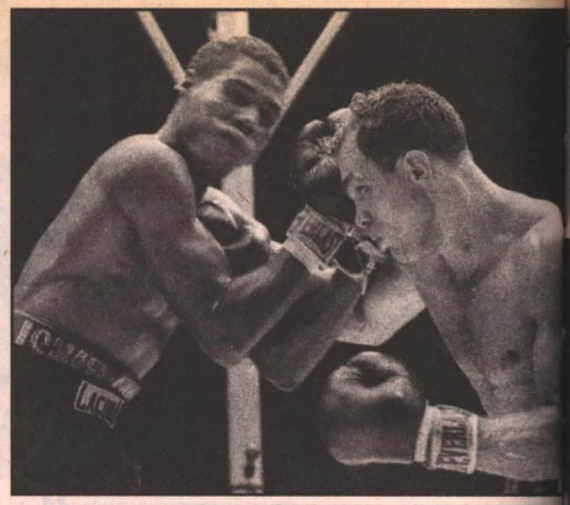
Julio Cesar Chavez

Culiacan, Mexico
Career: 1980-Present
96-1-1 with 78 kayos



Considered the greatest Mexican fighter ever, Chavez has been a world champion at three weights, with his shortest reign having come at 135 pounds. After winning the vacant WBC super featherweight title in 1984, and following with nine successful defenses, the relentless infighter and calculating technician won the WBA lightweight crown by halting Edwin Rosario in 1987. One year later, he added the WBC title by topping Jose Luis Ramirez. He then jumped to 140 pounds, where he has twice reigned since 1989. As we went to press, he was scheduled to defend against Oscar De La Hoya.

Chavez is now past his prime. But in the early-'90s, and until a controversial draw with Pernell Whitaker in 1993, "J.C. Superstar" was regarded as the best fighter, pound-for-pound, in the world.



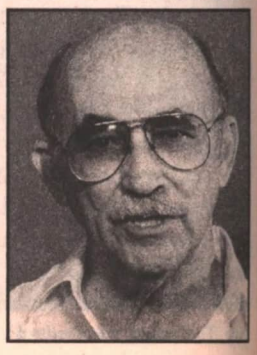
Ortiz and Panama's flashy Ismael Laguna engaged in a three-title fight series, with Ortiz winning the second and third bouts. This photo is from their third bout, held at Shea Stadium in New York City in August 1967.

MARIO RIVERA MARTINO

This would be an excellent matchup between master technicians. Ortiz was invincible during his time, losing only to Ismael Laguna, whom he subsequently thrashed twice, and Chavez proved his value at this weight with wins over Jose Luis Ramirez and especially Edwin Rosario.

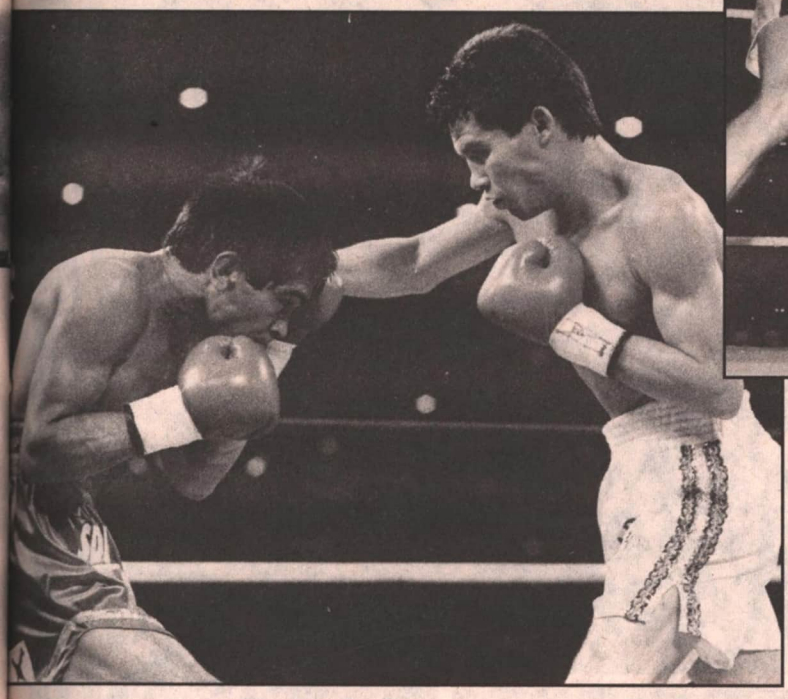
With the greater boxing skills, Ortiz would look to keep the fight at long range. He would take an early lead by landing potent left hook-right cross combinations. Chavez would look to get inside, where he would dominate because of his bodypunching. With an edge in stamina, he would close the gap in the middle and late rounds. Neither fighter can be questioned regarding ability to absorb punishment, and this would be a distance fight.

If the fight were to take place in the late-'80s, and [WBC President] Jose Sulaiman were to designate the officials, that would be a factor in favor of Chavez. However, if it were to take place during Ortiz' era, his manager, Honest Bill Daly, would most certainly have assured him more than an even break by demanding approval of the judges. Everything being equal, I'll go with Ortiz by a very slight margin, say 143-142 on points.



Mario Rivera Martino is The Ring's longtime correspondent in Puerto Rico.

Ortiz jabs at Kenny Lane during their 1964 lightweight title fight in San Juan. It was a rubber match between the longtime rivals, with the champion keeping the title on points.



Among the toughest opponents of Chavez' career was left-handed lightweight and fellow Mexican Jose Luis Ramirez, whom "J.C. Superstar" outpointed by technical decision in 1988.

LARRY MERCHANT

I rank Ortiz as 1 and 1A with Roberto Duran as the greatest lightweights I've ever seen. I don't know if I'd say he was underrated, but perhaps he's been somewhat forgotten; he came after the Beau Jack-Ike Williams era and before the Duran era. But he was simply a great, classic, two-handed fighter who could do everything. He wasn't a great puncher, but against Chavez, who takes such a good punch, that probably wouldn't matter. I think Ortiz could have done to Chavez all fight long what Meldrick Taylor did. And Ortiz, as schooled and disciplined as he was, had a great heart to go along with all those skills.

In 10, 15 years, when we're asked to place Chavez and Pernell Whitaker, we'll think of them as lightweights, because that's where they were at their best. In fact, I still think of them as lightweights, even though they're now fighting five and 12 pounds heavier. It's easy to underestimate what Chavez at his best would do against a fighter with greater or classic technique. Chavez broke down fighters like Ortiz. But Ortiz would outbox Chavez and fight him only on his terms. Ortiz by decision.

Larry Merchant is a boxing analyst for HBO.

BOB GOODMAN

Ortiz was very well-managed by Honest Bill Daly. His biggest problem, of course, was staying in condition. He was known to take a drink or two—and I was known to take one or two with him. But when he was on, he was very pretty to watch. He was the ultimate boxer-puncher. He saw everything well and could stay in front of you without getting hit solid. He had pretty quick hands, and he countered so well. And he fought such a good school of fighters. Not that Chavez didn't, but some of Julio's wins were in those jurisdictions in Mexico, where he picked his own opposition.

I probably made about 30 of Chavez' fights. The Chavez that took apart Edwin Rosario was the best version of all. The thing wasn't just how he'd pressure you into fighting his fight, but what he did—all the little things—when he got inside. It wasn't just the big left hook to the body. What he did to Rosario, to Ruben Castillo, those were clinics on infighting.

Both, of course, had great chins. But speed didn't bother Ortiz quite as much as it bothered Chavez. All in all, I think Ortiz was just a notch better fighter. In a 15-round fight, he'd win a decision.

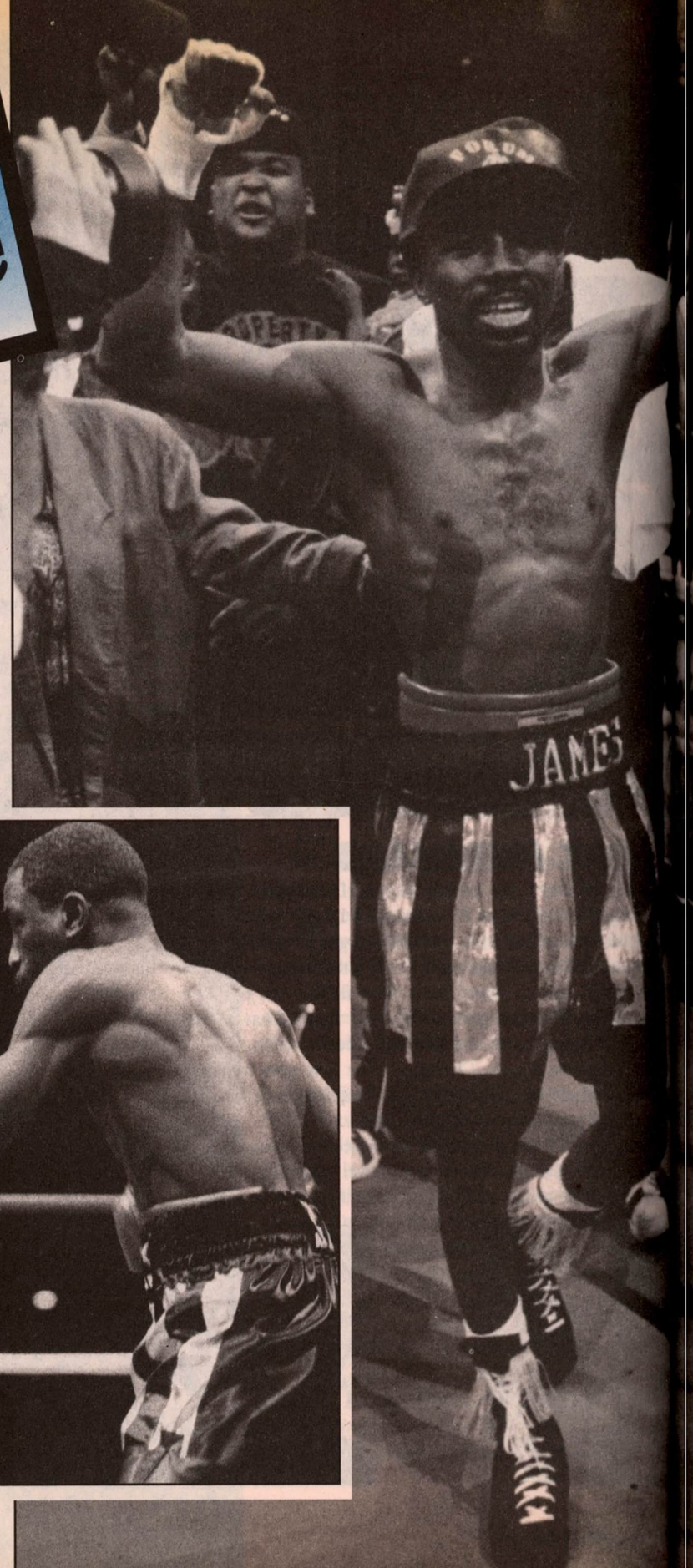
Bob Goodman is a longtime matchmaker and promoter.

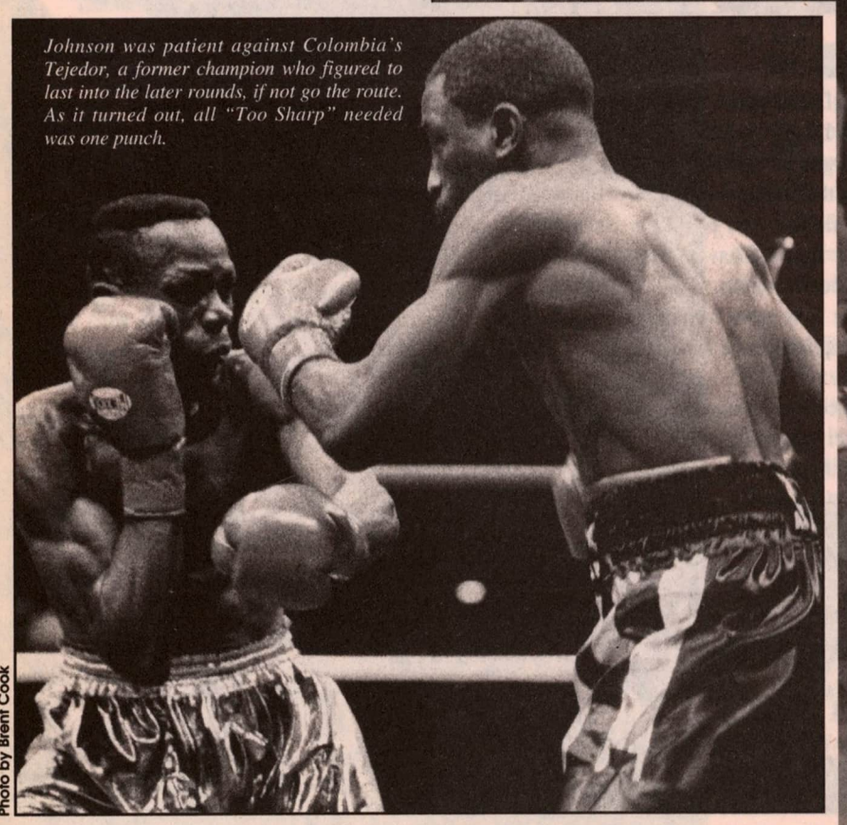
The Mark Of Excellence

By Ivan G. Goldman

In the old days, it wasn't unusual for a top-notch, winning fighter to have to wait and wait for a title shot. Sometimes it took years. But with all the world belts passed around these days, you'd think a talented crowd-pleaser like Mark "Too Sharp" Johnson could pick one up without much effort. A phone call or two and he's in the rotation, right?

Of course, that's not the way the world always works. When champions look for





Johnson was patient against Colombia's Tejedor, a former champion who figured to last into the later rounds, if not go the route. As it turned out, all "Too Sharp" needed was one punch.

Photo by Brent Cook

Photo by Jed Jacobsohn/Allsport

THE WAIT IS OVER FOR "TOO SHARP" JOHNSON

opponents, they sometimes decide a difficult southpaw like Johnson may be too capable for their own good. For a while there, it looked like the determined flyweight from Washington, D.C., would have to take his case to the United Nations.

Before one of them finally opened, he knocked on more doors than a Domino's delivery guy. The alphabet boys snubbed this poised dynamo with the one-punch kayo power like he was Newt Gingrich at a NOW party.

Finally, after years of deal attempts, the flyweight, armed with the IBF's number-one ranking, got his title shot. On May 4, Johnson made the most of it at the Arrowhead Pond in Anaheim, California, kayoing Francisco Tejedor at 1:35 of the first round to win the vacant IBF title.

The quick shellacking of the former IBF king was almost an anti-climactic event in the career of Johnson, who became the first African-American to win a world flyweight title.

"I always felt my title fight, when I got it, would be an easy fight," Johnson said. "I knew I would not be denied."

Said John Beyrooty, publicist for Forum Boxing, Johnson's promoter, "For a while there, they were calling him Mark 'Too Frustrated' Johnson. He could have

(Continued on page 62)

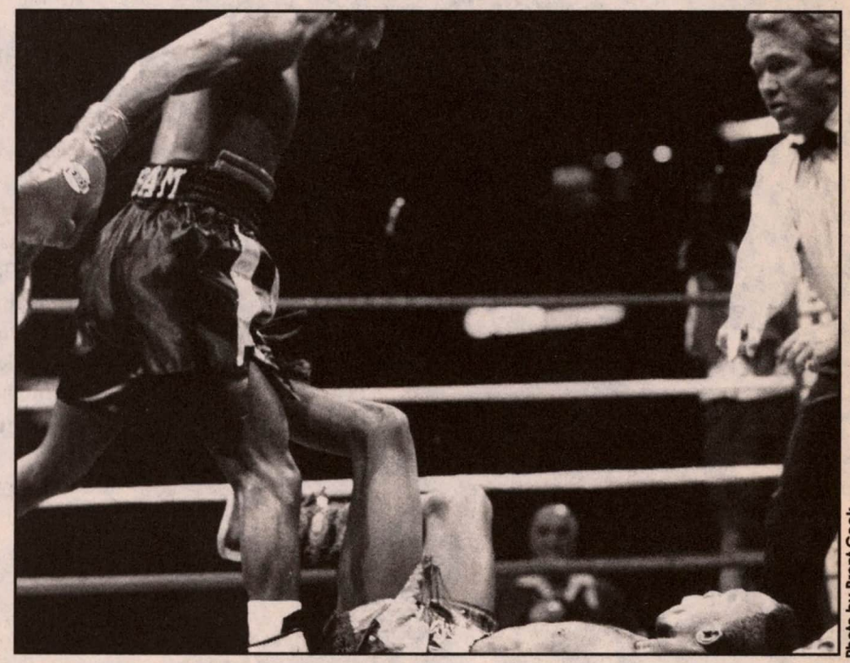


Photo by Brent Cook

Johnson's straight left, a counterpunch, left Tejedor flat on the canvas. The former champion valiantly tried to rise, but his legs were no longer in working order.

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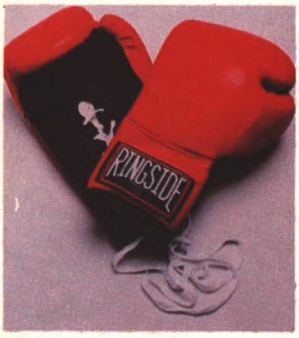

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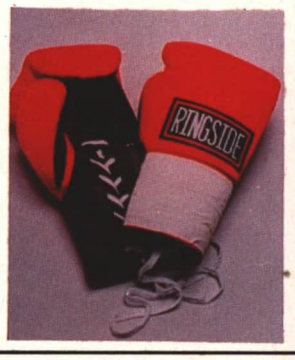

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By Stanley Weston
Publisher, THE RING Magazine

TIME CAPSULES

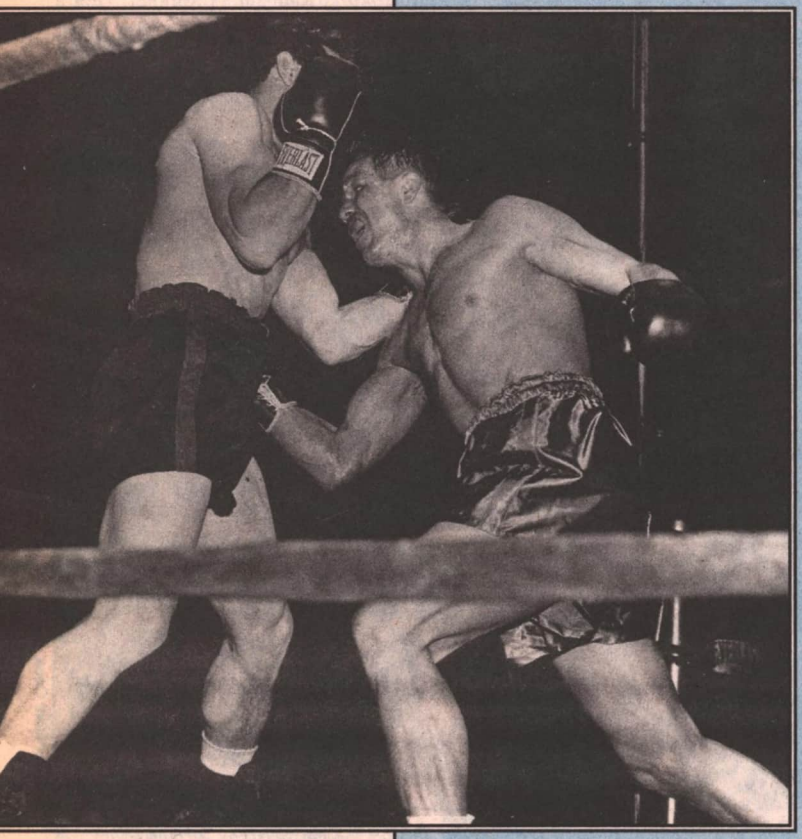
DIG TO THE GUT!

(June 10, 1948)

The last order master trainer Izzy Klein always barked into Tony Zale's pink ear before launching him out for the next round was, "Dig to the body!" Or, usually in the later rounds, Izzy would sometimes edit his patented cliche to get more oomph into it: "Dig it to the gut!" And always, Gary, Indiana's "Man Of Steel," even if with his last vestiges of strength, would obey. Or damned near die trying.

Zale was the consummate fighting machine. If he had any weakness at all, it was when stick-and-run guys like Billy Conn and Georgie Abrams frustrated the hell out of him. But throw Zale a natural-born slugger who wanted only to do the same thing Tony wanted to do to him, which was to knock his brains out (say, a guy like Rocky Graziano), and you had every fight fan's true paradise.

The three Zale-Graziano wars, all with the middleweight championship hanging in the balance, rate, along with the Tunney-Greb and Pep-Saddler fights, as the most classic of boxing series, never-to-be-forgotten rivalries that squeezed every drop of power, skill, endurance, intensity, and raw courage out of all six of these legendary combatants.



Although every minute of every round of all three Zale-Graziano blockbusters (a total of 15 rounds) seethed in brutality, it was the rubber match collision, held on June 10, 1948, in Newark, New Jersey, that makes even the most highly respected of all referees, Arthur Mercante, who has worked more world title fights than anybody in history, revolt at the memory. "Cavalier never should have let it go that far," says Mercante, referring to referee Paul Cavalier. "To this day, I still can't believe Graziano came out alive."

Maybe today's trainers should borrow a page from Izzy Klein's playbook and order their charges to "dig to the body!" Or, for added juice, "dig to the gut!" But in order for that strategy to work, you must have a guy like Tony Zale ready to obey orders. The problem is, a guy like Zale comes along only once in a generation—maybe.

Ordered to "dig to the gut!", defending middleweight champion Tony Zale bolted from his corner to start the second round and immediately buried his right fist wrist-deep into Rocky Graziano's body. The shattering shot led to Rocky's eventual knockout in the next round.

TOO OLD TO FIGHT ... BUT NOT TO DANCE

(December 1952)

The life-sucking heat from banks of over-the-ring klieg lights, combined with the 95-degree heat of a scorching night in New York City and the coaxing from the rat-a-tat fists of Joey Maxim, caused Ray Robinson to wilt, then collapse, face-down. Was this, the one and only time in that unparalleled career or careers that the Sugarman failed to finish a fight, his final divorce from boxing? It certainly seemed that way.

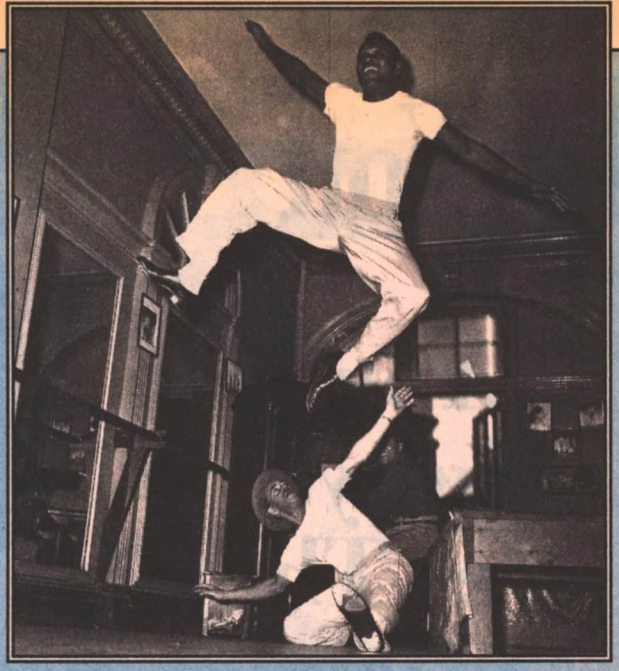
It took three months of constant urging by Ray's manager, George Gainford, his lifelong friend and trainer, Harry Wiley, and an occasional fatherly hug of confidence from promoter Big Jim Norris to half-coax, half-tug Robinson near a gymnasium. But when that unique, pungent combination stink of sweat, liniment, and cocoa butter, familiar to every boxer, pierced Sugar's nostrils, it rekindled the bitter memory of intense heat and failure. He made his final decision, and on December 18, 1952, he made it official with a two-sentence announcement: "I owe everything to boxing. Now it's time for me to move on."

Ray was about to sit down at the Manhattan restaurant where the press conference was being held when a newsman bellowed, "What are you gonna do, Ray?" Sugar's face split into that famous smile. "I'm going into show business."

Robinson was 31. Not young, to be sure, but not too old for a fighter, particularly one as well-preserved and with still-razor-sharp reflexes. Unquestionably, to give up so much must have been a traumatic decision. But only the man himself understood how much juice he had left in his tank. And one thing was for sure: Nobody bleeds in show biz.

Weeks before he announced his ring retirement, Ray, in preparation for his new career, had cut a deal to take dancing lessons from master choreographer Henry LeTang. LeTang, who had worked with superstars like Billie Holiday, Edith Fellows, Lena Horne, and Gene Kelly, was fascinated by what he called "Sugar's natural flair for hoofin', limitless endurance, and the stage presence of Fred Astaire." After weeks of intensive training under the master's piercing eyes, Sugar Ray Robinson, "Song And Dance Man Extraordinaire," debuted at the famed New York night club The French Casino, on February 12, 1953. His weekly paycheck: $12,500.

Among the SRO crowd that night was an army of Ray's friends and cronies, including Joe Louis, Jersey Joe Walcott, Johnny Bratton, baseball's Jackie Robinson, Dr. Vincent Nardiello, radio sports maven Steve Ellis, and Hearst's biting gossip queen, Dorothy Kilgallen. But after only two weeks, it became painfully obvious that while the public would break down doors to feast on Sugar's ring artistry, shelling out $15 a pop to watch him mimic Fred Astaire was a bit much. The French Casino bought out the remainder of Ray's one-month contract, and Sugar tossed his practically brand-new dancing shoes into the same fireproof trunk in which he kept his two treasured championship belts (welterweight and middleweight) presented by THE RING.



Master choreographer and dance teacher Henry LeTang hovers beneath the airborne Sugar Ray Robinson in LeTang's New York City studio, where Ray was preparing for his new career as a song-and-dance man. Sugar's natural talents and endurance amazed LeTang.

Depressed, unsure of his future, and with a bankbook in which decimal points were replacing zeros at an alarming rate, the Sugarman brooded for 10 months, until October 20, 1954, when he announced, "I will return to boxing and try to regain my middleweight title." This bold decree had the same shock effect as did the next day's sunrise. But what followed became, unquestionably, the most remarkable reincarnation in an ancient sport whose heritage is filled with back-from-the-dead epics.

When Ray Robinson quit boxing for show biz, he truly believed his ring days were over. His career had spanned 12 years (1940-1952), grueling years packed with a maze of battles so brutal and life-draining that any one of them could have destroyed mortal men. Only Sugar Ray had the resilience and fortitude not only to shake off the murderous, piledriving assaults of killers like LaMotta, Graziano, Artie Levine, and Steve Belloise, but to finish with all the killers stretched out before him. With so tumultuous a history behind him, it's understandable why Robinson truly believed he was through with boxing.

Ray was right. His ring days were over—*half*-over. Incredibly, he would continue fighting for another 11 tumultuous years. And he would not only regain the middleweight crown, he would lose it and regain it again three more times. On December 10, 1965, the 44-year-old Sugarman announced his retirement for the second and last time.

During the second half of a boxing career that will never be equaled, Robinson collected three more THE RING championship belts. All of them went into Ray's fireproof trunk, tucked in alongside the two belts he received during Part One. But what in the world was that pair of practically brand-new patent leather dancing shoes doing in there with such treasures? Let's keep it a secret between both of us. ■

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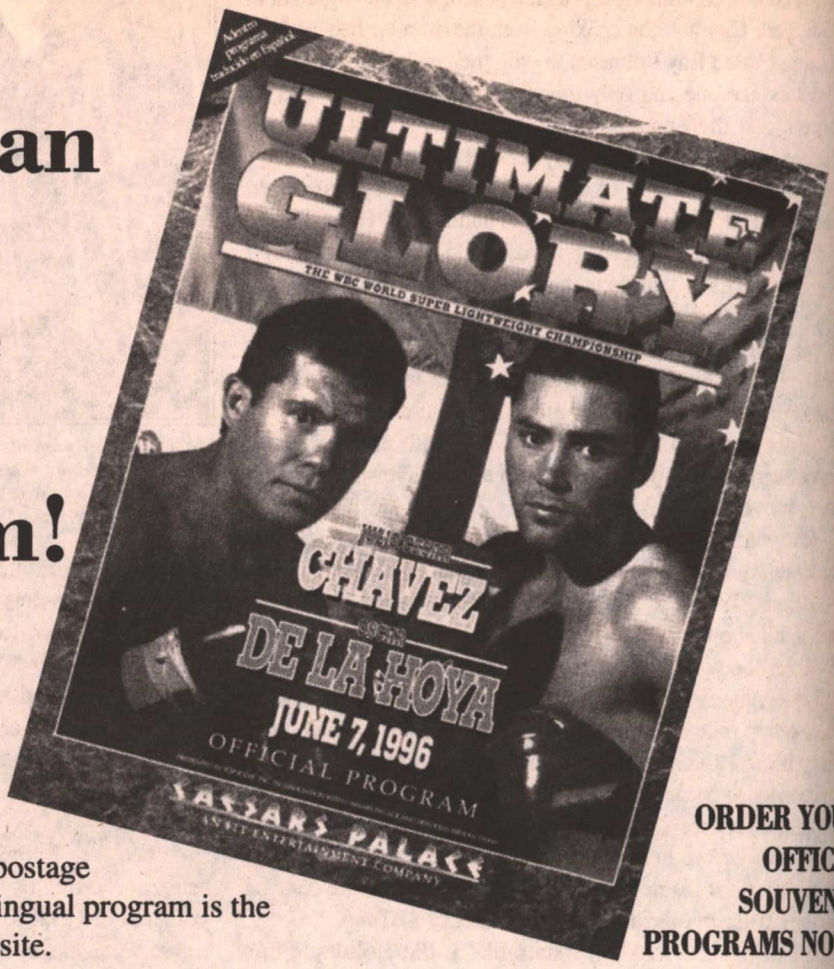

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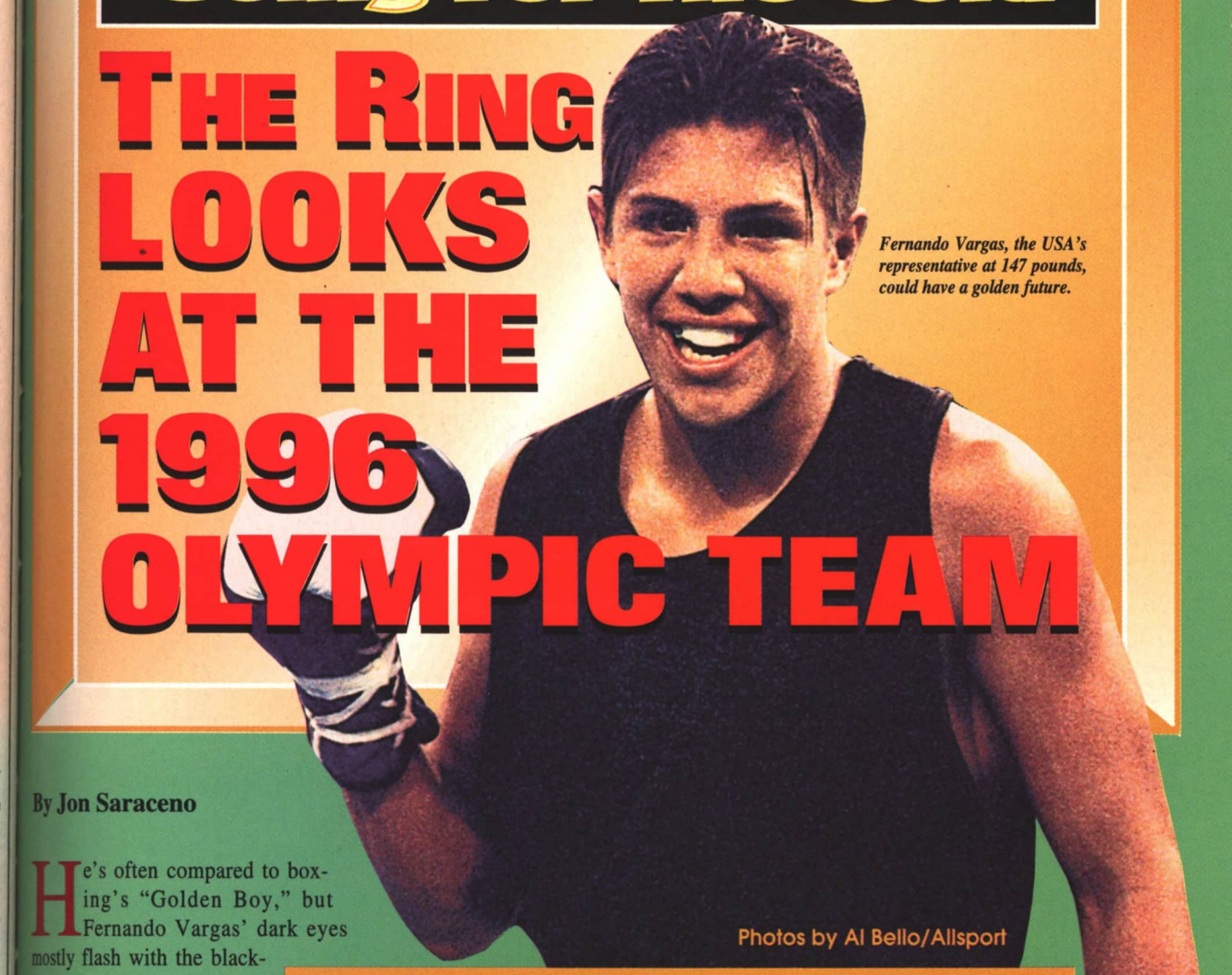
Going For The Gold

THE RING LOOKS AT THE 1996 OLYMPIC TEAM



Fernando Vargas, the USA's representative at 147 pounds, could have a golden future.

Photos by Al Bello/Allsport

By Jon Saraceno

He's often compared to boxing's "Golden Boy," but Fernando Vargas' dark eyes mostly flash with the black-sheep anger of a young Roberto Duran, and not the gushy, crossover appeal of Oscar De La Hoya.

"I don't want to be known as the next Oscar De La Hoya—I want to be known as the first Fernando Vargas," says the 18-year-old U.S. Olympic welterweight as he

The 12 members of the 1996 U.S. Olympic boxing team. Top row, from left: Lawrence Clay-Bey, Rhoshii Wells, Antonio Tarver, Nate Jones, David Reid, Fernando Vargas. Bottom row, from left: Floyd Mayweather, Zahir Raheem, Eric Morel, Albert Guardado, David Diaz, Terrance Cauthen.

Light flyweight Albert Guardado made the team the hard way, winning twice at the Box-Offs over fellow collegian Jauquin Gallardo. Guardado defeated his rival by scores of 15-11 and 25-11.

prepares for the Games in Atlanta.

Don't expect an instant replay of De La Hoya's poignant story four years ago in Barcelona. After winning a gold medal, the Los Angeles boxer gazed skyward and pointed to the heavens, satisfied that he kept the promise he had made to his dying mother.

For one thing, Vargas' mother, Alicia Romo, is alive and well—and loud enough to make anyone within earshot scream "No mas! No mas!" During the Olympic Trials and Box-Offs, she led a small but boisterous family contingent. Vargas' supporters chanted, "Fer-nan-do," and were decked out in "Going For The Gold" T-shirts and Team Vargas caps.

Duplicating De La Hoya's Olympic performance will be difficult. The 5'7" Vargas' aggressive style is suited to the pro game, and Juan Hernandez of Cuba is considered the world's premier amateur 147-pounder.

While her son has boxed since he was 12, Alicia Romo says, "I would rather he become a movie star or model." Something in Vargas' personality, however, suggests he is more suited for the ring.

"Some kids are just angry," says Vargas, who grew up in Oxnard, California. "When I go into the ring, I think, *I want to hurt that person.*"

If you want to see Vargas' eyes narrow, just mention one name.

Vargas was selected the outstanding boxer at the Trials, but after he was nearly upset at the Box-Offs by Brandon Mitchem, his opponent remarked, "I think they got what they wanted. They got Fernando Vargas—the next Oscar De La Hoya."

Vargas has heard the De La Hoya refrain since he won the U.S. light welterweight title in 1994. Surface comparisons seem obvious: Both are Mexican-Americans from Southern California who made their respective Olympic teams as young amateur stars. Even their voices are strikingly similar.

"I don't want to be like De La Hoya—I don't like it when I'm compared to De La Hoya," Vargas snaps. "Don't compare me to Oscar. You're a writer. Would you like it if somebody said you wrote like somebody else? I don't want to be in anybody's shadow.

"De La Hoya slaps a lot; he doesn't really punch. And he fights too many guys who have to go up in weight. Let's see how he does against somebody his own size. Fight somebody like Felix Trinidad and see if you're the Golden Boy. To be the best, you've got to beat the best. De La Hoya hasn't done that. Hopefully, someday I'll fight him."

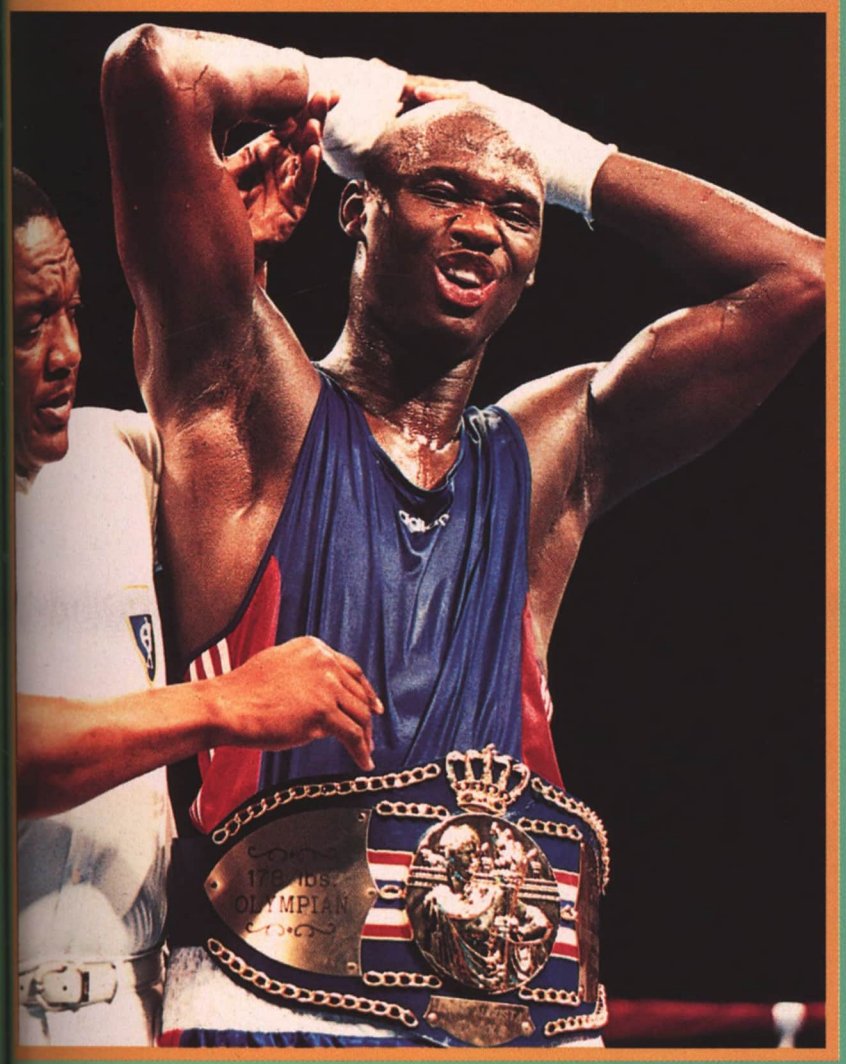
The two have already sparred, and perhaps it was De La Hoya's refusal to

Like Guardado, featherweight Floyd Mayweather had to twice win at the Box-Offs. His victim was Augustine Sanchez, whom he outpointed in their final bout by 20-10.

acknowledge the younger fighter afterward that ignited Vargas' passionate distaste for his rival.

But whereas De La Hoya's image suffered nary a tinge of public scandal during his Olympic march to Barcelona in 1992, Vargas stumbled briefly and nearly toppled off the amateur road to Atlanta. In 1995, he accepted $20,000 in exchange for a managerial contract with California lawyer Robert Caron, who once represented Lupe Aquino, and partner Don Lukens. The contract, also signed by Vargas' mother and longtime trainer Eduardo Garcia, provided the boxer with $4,000 a month until the Olympics; travel and training expenses; financial assistance for a high school tutor; a $10,000 bonus for a gold medal won in any international competition; and a $200,000 bonus for an Olympic gold medal, or $50,000 after the Games.

David Reid, the squad's representative at light middleweight, decisioned Darnell Wilson for his ticket to Atlanta. Reid is one of three team members from Philadelphia.



Perhaps the USA's best hope for a gold medal is southpaw light heavyweight Antonio Tarver, who, at the age of 27, is far more physically mature and experienced than most of his teammates. The Floridian is ranked first in the world and has a style based on movement and a strong jab.

Caron and Lukens were to receive 24 percent of all of Vargas' income for four years. After Vargas' amateur eligibility was threatened, the contract was bought out by Todd Management for in excess of $55,000, the sum of cash already dispersed to Vargas and assorted family members. His eligibility was reconfirmed by AIBA, the sport's international ruling body. (Amateur boxers may only receive funds channeled through a trust fund set up by USA Boxing.)

Now, Todd Management, headed by Todd DuBoef, whose mother is married to promoter Bob Arum, has the right of first refusal when Vargas turns pro. Sugar Ray Leonard is said to be involved in the deal. Already, Arum has competition. Manager Shelly Finkel, who works closely with Main Events, is interested in Vargas. But the fighter may be leaning toward working with Roy Jones' promoter, as the amateur is represented legally by Stan Levin of Square Ring.

Prior to the Box-Offs, Vargas worked out at Jones' camp in Pensacola, Florida.

"Everyone's after him—his head and ego are huge," says one boxing insider familiar with the recruitment of Vargas.

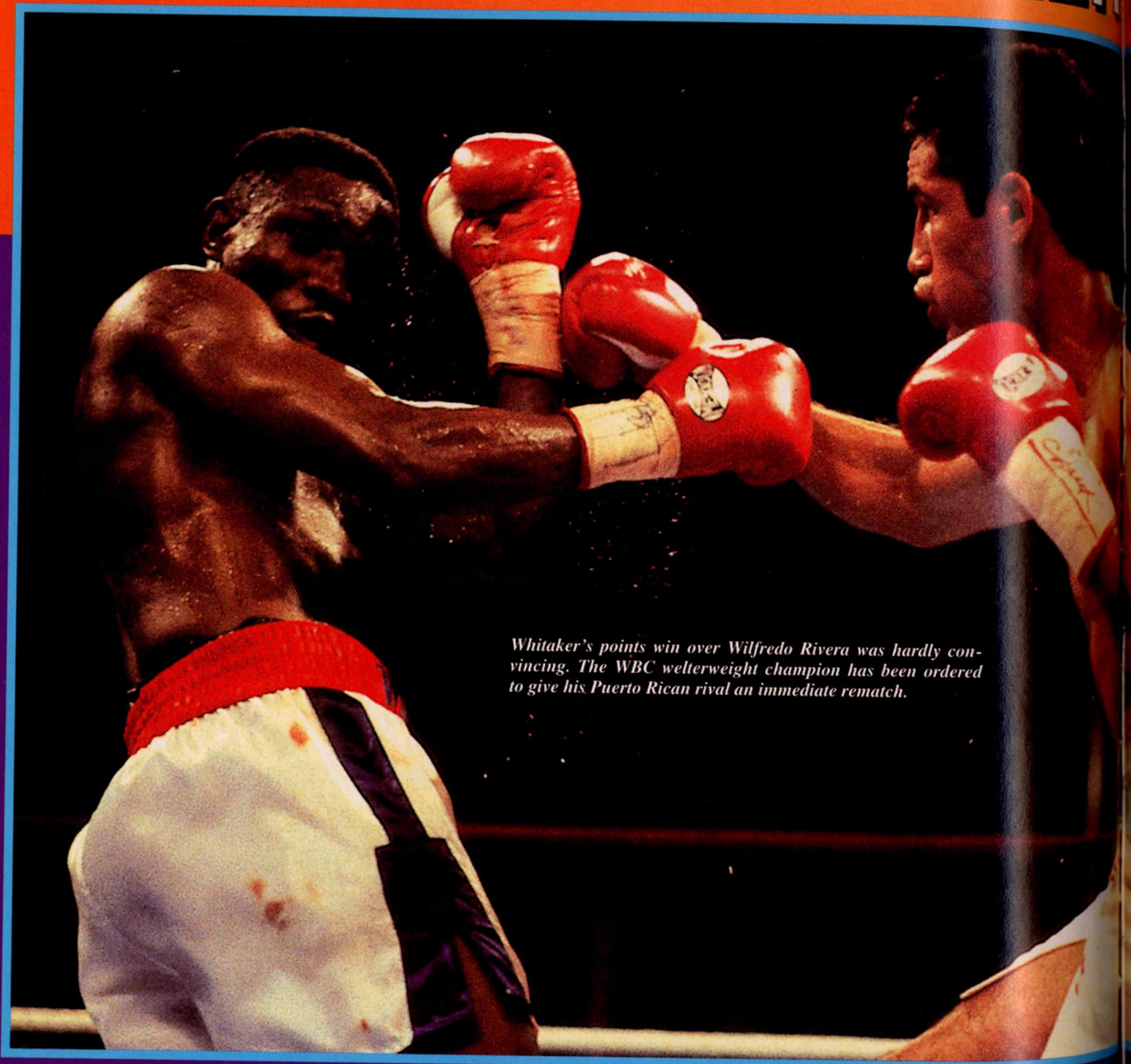
Vargas won't argue the point: "Having an Olympic gold medal around my neck is worth millions. I want to turn pro and have that fame and glory."

Just like … well, you know who.

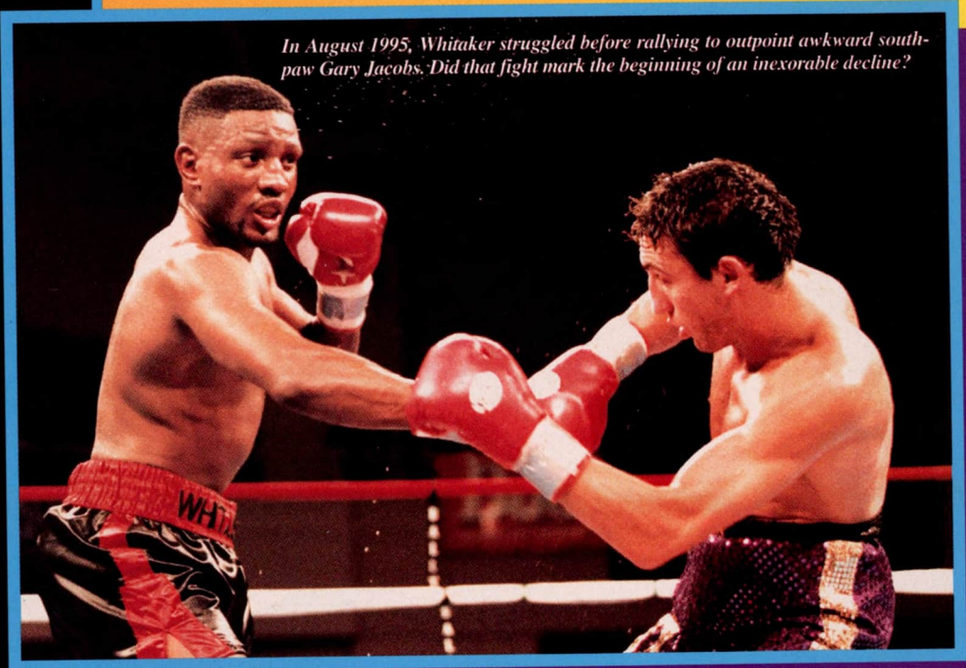
(Continued on page 53)

IS PERNELL WHITAKER WASHED-UP?

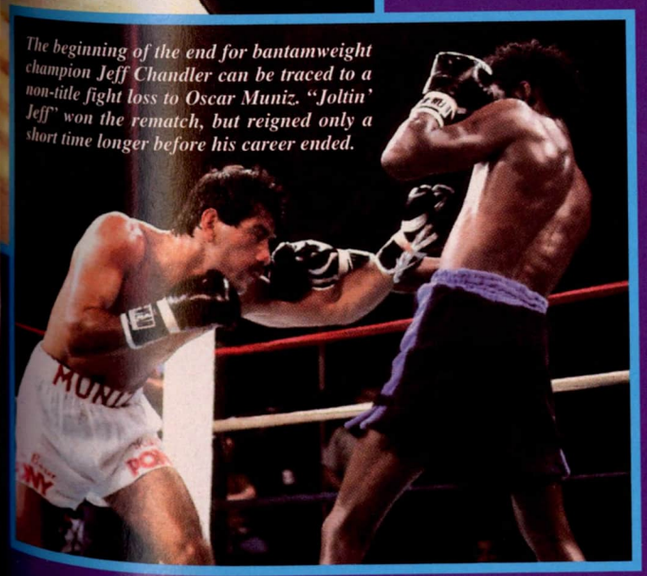
The Past Reveals His Future



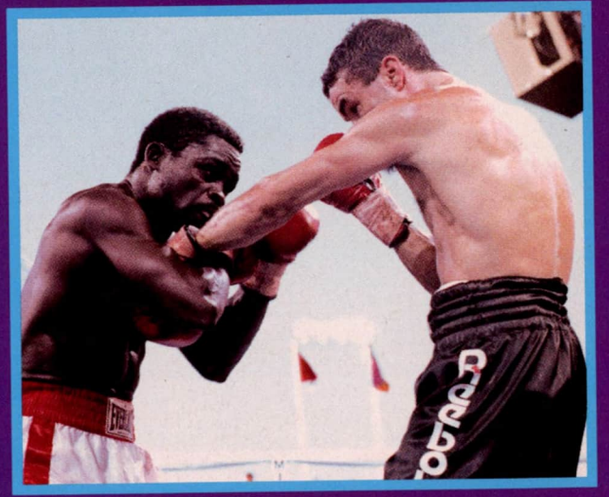
Whitaker's points win over Wilfredo Rivera was hardly convincing. The WBC welterweight champion has been ordered to give his Puerto Rican rival an immediate rematch.



In August 1995, Whitaker struggled before rallying to outpoint awkward southpaw Gary Jacobs. Did that fight mark the beginning of an inexorable decline?



The beginning of the end for bantamweight champion Jeff Chandler can be traced to a non-title fight loss to Oscar Muniz. "Joltin' Jeff" won the rematch, but reigned only a short time longer before his career ended.



Many observers insisted Azumah Nelson was through when he struggled to a draw vs. Jeff Fenech. That was five years ago. "The Professor," of course, had lots of championship bouts left in him.

By Nigel Collins

The buzzards are circling Pernell Whitaker. The WBC welterweight champion looked so frazzled eking out a split decision over Wilfredo Rivera in his most recent title defense, critics are ready to pack his carcass in ice and phone the undertaker. But what did "Sweet Pea's" shabby showing actually mean? Is he really as far gone as the Rivera fight suggested?

Boxing people tend to toss around terms like "washed-up" and "shot" in a cavalier manner. Sometimes these snap judgments turn out to be correct, sometimes they don't. And while the future always provides the final verdict, a peek into the past can furnish us with many insights.

The decline of every fighter is different. Some go overnight, their careers abruptly over, often the result of an injury or a bad beating. Others erode, their skills deterio-

(Continued on page 54)

Even though he absorbed plenty of punishment, Lewis always fought back, showing much more resiliency than when he lost the WBC title to Oliver McCall. But what will happen if Tyson hits him as often as Mercer did?

LENNOX LEWIS TOPS RAY MERCER

Is He Tough Enough For Tyson?

Banged up, Lewis nonetheless kept banging away at Mercer, whose division-best chin didn't fail him. Lewis won a majority decision, though many observers thought Mercer deserved the verdict.

Photo by Jason Ross Lavin

Photo by Simon Bruty/Allsport

Lewis had to contend with swelled eyes, but he didn't have to concern himself with a swelled head after this fight.

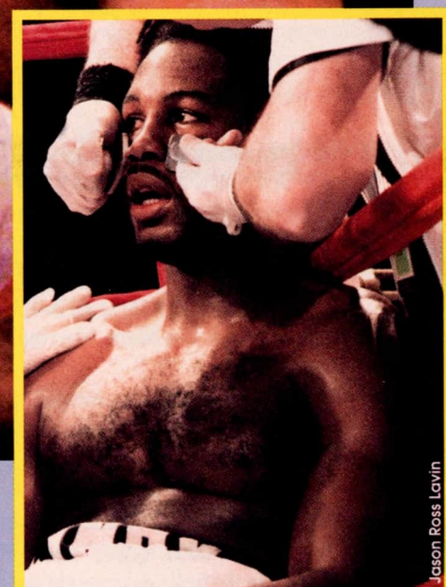


Photo by Jason Ross Lavin

By Steve Farhood

Lennox Lewis sat motionless on a folding chair, his hands clasped on his lap, his eyes closed. He said nothing, making it difficult to determine whether he was exhausted, relieved, at peace, or all three. Forming a semi-circle, the members of his camp filled the dressing room with cheap talk. Assistant trainer Harold Knight held an ice bag to Lewis' right eye. Trainer Emanuel Steward examined the heavyweight's left eye while explaining to a reporter why Lewis had just been outjabbed by the stout, square Ray Mercer. Relieved and full of nervous energy, manager Frank Maloney and promoter Panos Eliades paced, stopped, and repeatedly stared at Lewis as if he were the feature display at a museum exhibit.

People spoke at the fighter, but not to him, because Lewis' body language made it clear they weren't going to get a response. "You've never been in a fight like this," Steward said to his prize heavy-

weight. In that sense, Lewis had been provided the perfect tuneup. But despite his serenity, and all the smiles around him, the reporter couldn't help but wonder: *What will happen if Mike Tyson hits Lennox Lewis with the same shots Mercer landed?*

With judges (the black-robed variety) having become boxing's upper-level matchmakers, Lewis risked as much as $15-million by taking on fellow 1988 Olympic gold medalist Mercer before a crowd of 17,041 at Madison Square Garden on May 10. That's about what the British heavyweight, who is rated first by the WBC, stood to earn for a proposed title fight with champion Mike Tyson. In May, Passaic County (New Jersey) Superior Court Judge Amos Saunders ruled that Tyson could not fight anyone other than former champion Lewis. Lewis, though, accepted a $4-million fee to step aside so that Tyson could keep a July 13 date with WBA champion Bruce Seldon. Assuming Tyson defeats Seldon, there are three possible scenarios for this fall: Tyson will defend against Lewis; Tyson will vacate the WBC throne, and Lewis and Oliver McCall will clash for the vacant title; or Lewis will opt for a fight with Riddick Bowe, allowing Tyson to keep the WBC title without fighting him at all. Stay tuned.

The legal and political wranglings aside, Lewis' majority decision victory over Mercer, no matter how unconvincing, cemented his status as one of the three best heavyweights in the world. In Tyson's quest to prove he's again number one, wins over the likes of Frank Bruno and Seldon carry little weight. At the moment, Lewis and Bowe are his only real challenges. It would be nice if they fought each other in an unofficial eliminator, but promotional politics continue to block that matchup. As a result, Tyson-Lewis is, for now, about as good as we're gonna get.

"Quality-wise, as far as Mike's potential opponents go, Bowe is the best," said Tyson's trainer, Jay Bright. "I'd rate Lewis number two."

Some fights create more questions than they answer, but Lewis-Mercer wasn't one of them. Ten rounds told us three things about the winner. First, Lewis, while hardly technically superior, has improved under the guidance of Steward. Second, he's a lot tougher, and his chin is a lot better than the McCall fight suggested. Third, when his power doesn't carry him to a kayo victory, he's vulnerable to pressure.

How does all this relate to a proposed bout with Tyson? Point number three might be the only one that matters.

"I think Lewis is vulnerable to pressure regardless of whether his power is working or not," said Bright. "I saw improvements [in the Mercer fight], but what he's learning and adapting to presently is newly formed. Everything Mike does is automatic; he's been doing it since day one. Mike's pressure is gonna leave Lewis in as many little pieces as the little red barn in *Twister*."

(Continued on page 58)

BIG BOYZ IN THE BIG APPLE

On the Lewis-Mercer card at the Garden, Evander Holyfield, 211, Atlanta, Georgia, registered his first stoppage victory in almost five years, halting Bobby Czyz, 210, Raritan, New Jersey, after five rounds.

Backing Czyz to the ropes and snapping his head with powerpunches, Holyfield, 32-3 (23), dominated from the start. In the third, a flurry prompted referee Ron Lipton to issue a standing eight-count. After that round, Czyz, 44-7 (28), complained to trainer Tommy Parks, "Something's burning in my eyes. Check his gloves."

Czyz fought back strongly in the fourth, but Holyfield took the fifth. When Czyz returned to his corner, Parks said to Lipton, "Just stop the fight; he can't see anymore," and the referee did just that.

"By the fifth, I couldn't see," said Czyz, 34. "There was like one big white film over my eyes."

While describing the 33-year-old Holyfield as "beyond reproach," Czyz, a former light heavyweight and cruiserweight champion, insisted a foreign substance from "The Real Deal's" gloves had entered his eyes. Said Lipton, "There was nothing I could detect." Nonetheless, Holyfield's gloves were impounded by the New York State Athletic Commission.

Photo by Jason Ross Lovin

Holyfield teed off for all five rounds

"I believe I'll fight again," said Holyfield, who wants a chance to win the heavyweight title for a third time.

The judges were Eva Shain, Melvina Lathan, and Luis Rivera.

***

Also on the card, the resurgent Tim Witherspoon, 224, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, kayoed Jorge Luis Gonzalez, 250, Las Vegas, Nevada, via Havana, Cuba, in the fifth round. Witherspoon, 38, dropped Gonzalez, 31, with an overhand right to the top of the head in round three, and finished him with a flurry in the fifth. After the 6'7" Cuban went down along the ropes, he was counted out by referee Joe Santarpia at the 2:54 mark.

Witherspoon is 45-4 (30), and Gonzalez 24-2 (23).

"I watched the other fights," said Witherspoon, referring to Lewis-Mercer and Holyfield-Czyz, "and if that's all they have to offer, I feel I'm the best heavyweight out there."

The judges were Eva Shain, Melvina Lathan, and Luis Rivera.

–SF

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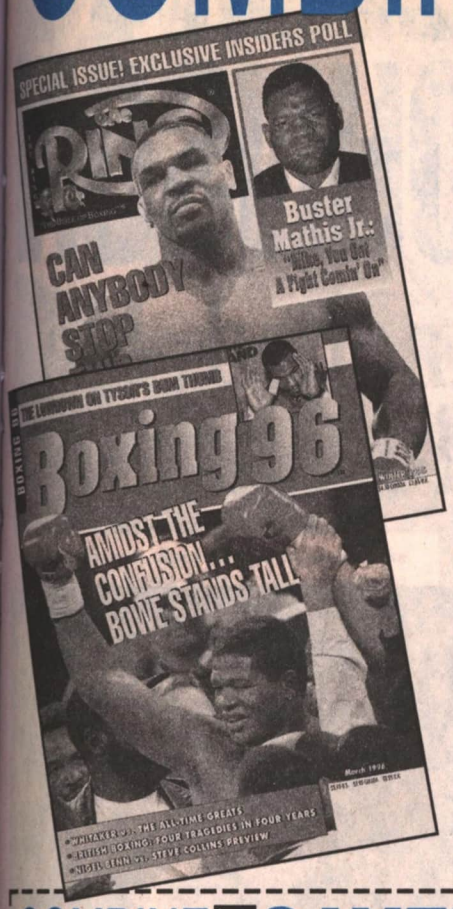

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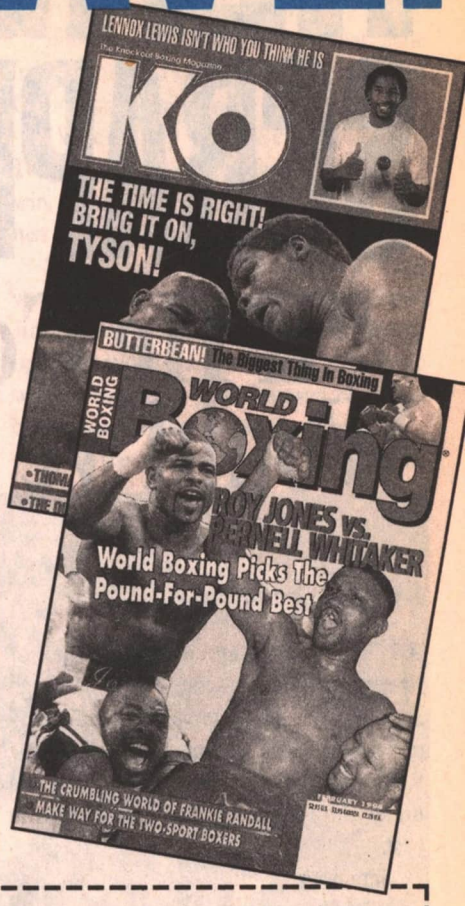

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HEAVYWEIGHT SCRAPIRON JOHNSON

"If He Could've Punched, He Would've Been World Champ"

By Pete Ehrmann

He was named after one of Hollywood's most famous tough guys, but there was nothing phony or scripted about the toughness of George Raft Johnson, who earned his own fame under the nickname that described him best.

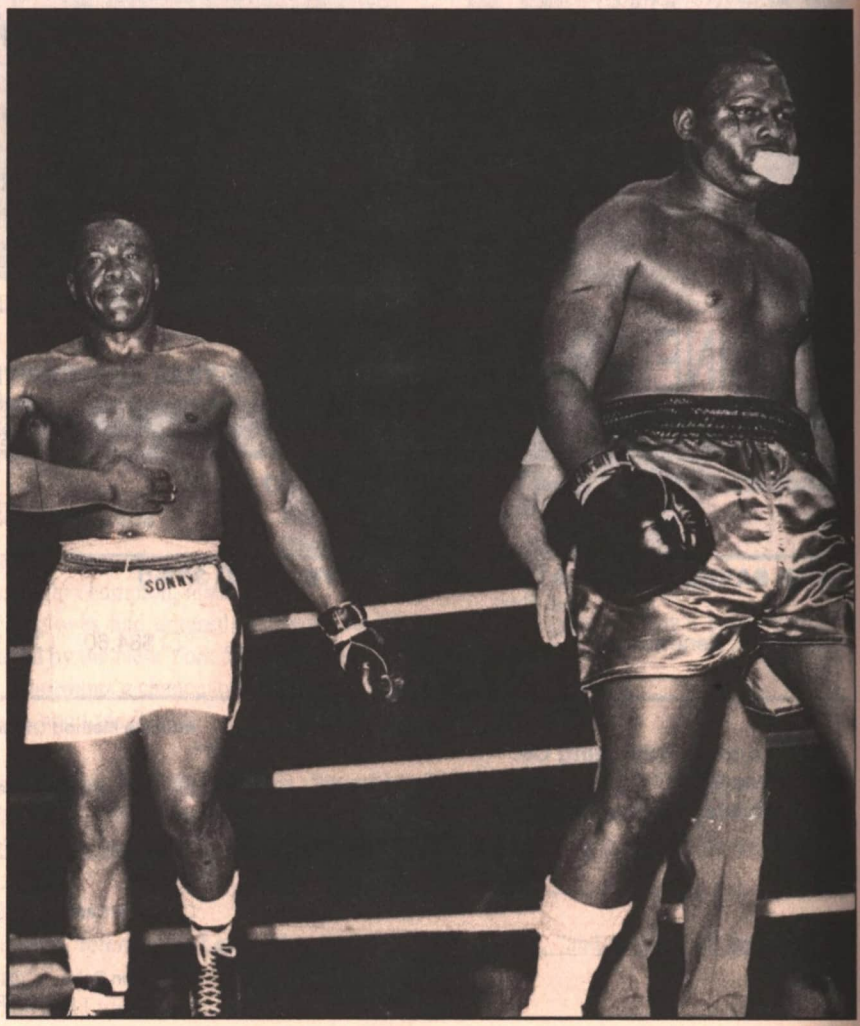
Scrapiron.

While he was never a champion or even a contender himself, many who were had to go through this thoroughbred of heavyweight trialhorses to get there.

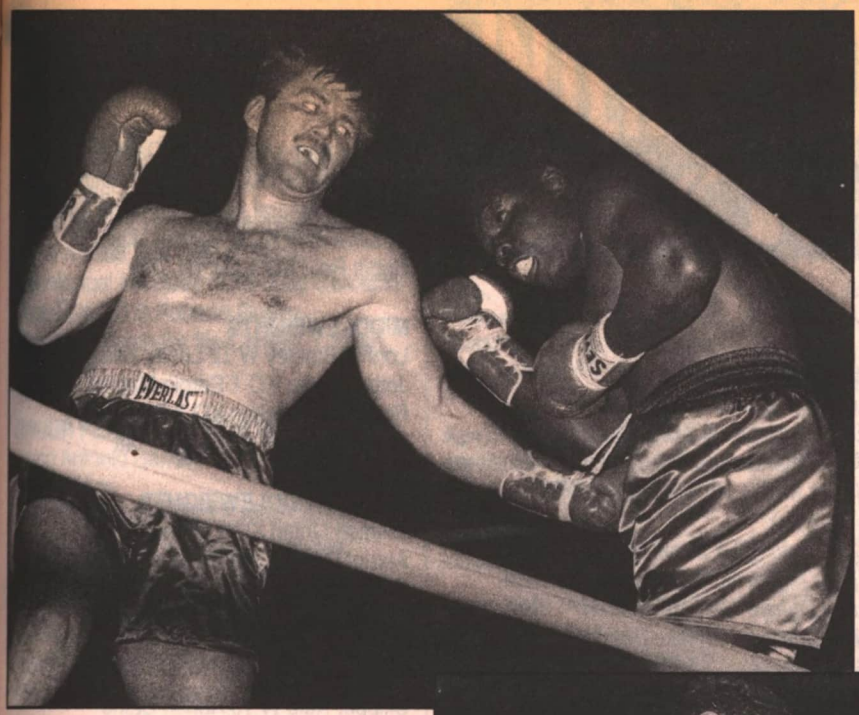
"I was a steppingstone; if you beat Scrap, you got a shot at the title, and if you didn't, you wasn't ready for it," says the 56-year-old resident of Los Angeles, whose roster of opponents during his 14-year career included George Foreman, Joe Frazier, Sonny Liston, and Jerry Quarry—plus a lot of other heavyweights of the '60s and '70s whose climb to the big time was cut short by one of the most colorful journeymen of his time.

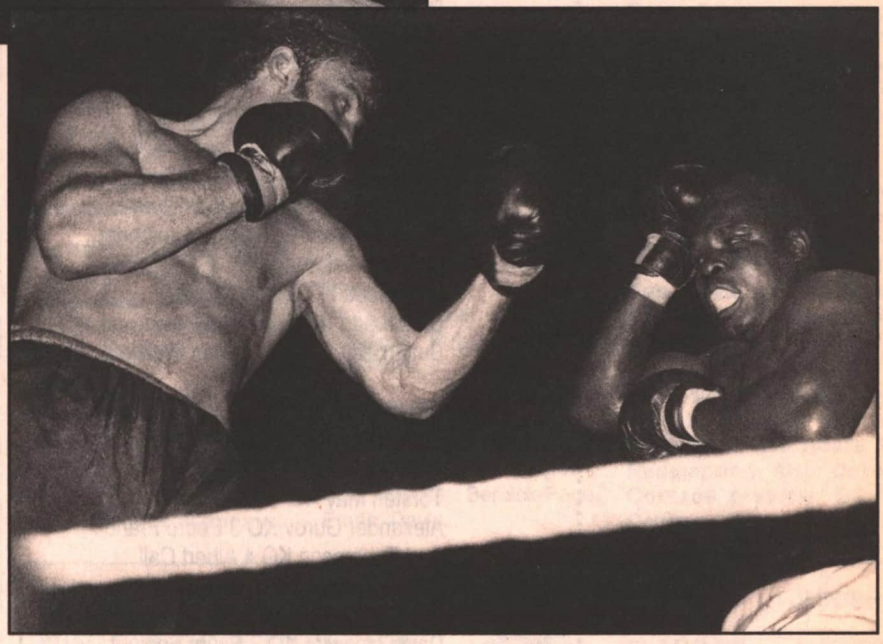
"If Scrappy could've punched, he would have been world champion," recalls Joe Orbillo, one of the City of Angels' top young heavyweights of 30 years ago. Orbillo sparred hundreds of rounds with Johnson at the Hoover Street Gym, where Scrapiron now trains an occasional boxer when he isn't working as a masseur.

"Scrapiron is no Fancy Dan," wrote *Los*



Scrapiron Johnson frustrated the best of boxing's big men. Sonny Liston was one of the few heavyweights to stop the trialhorse, who was rescued in the seventh round of their 1969 rumble in Las Vegas.





No one will ever claim Scrapiron ducked the tough guys. In March 1970, he lost on points to Jerry Quarry (above). That came between fights with Sonny Liston and George Foreman. In November 1970, Scrapiron traveled to London and dropped a decision to a 20-year-old up-and-comer named Joe Bugner (right).

Angeles Times reporter John Allen in 1965. "He comes to fight, and can be hit."

After George Foreman, then 19, undefeated, and marching toward his first incarnation as world champion, stopped Johnson on a cut eye in May 1970, the future two-time titleholder said, "I have nothing but respect for Scrapiron. He isn't just a catcher. He throws some punches, too. I am happy to beat a good fighter."

Not as happy, however, as Jerry Quarry was after the then-top-ranked contender took what was supposed to be just a tuneup against Scrapiron in 1972. The boos after the decision for Quarry was announced in Honolulu could almost be heard on the mainland.

"I was robbed," said Johnson, his mantra after many of the losses on his official record of 20-21-4 (9).

Scrapiron was born and grew up in Oklahoma City, and spent much of his childhood roaming around with a coaster wagon collecting discarded iron for his family's scrapyard. Hence the nickname that later would likewise apply to the chassis that such hard-punching heavyweights as Foreman and Liston would be unable to dent.

A lot of boxers take up the gloves to escape poverty or make a big name for themselves. Scrapiron did it because "there ain't too much to do" in Oklahoma City.

Good teachers were scarce. "I learned myself how to fight," says Scrap, who moved to Los Angeles in 1965 and promptly got stopped by contender Amos "Big Train" Lincoln in his Olympic Auditorium debut.

"When I got to the heavyweight division," says the 5'9" Johnson, who started out as a middleweight, "I kept getting knocked down. I was boxing 6'5" guys."

Some advice from Archie Moore changed that. The cagey former light heavyweight champion recommended that the 215-pound Johnson "learn how to roll, keep your hands up, and go forward."

"Then," says Scrap, "I started getting close and banging to the body."

It was a crowd-pleasing style that made him a huge favorite with Southern California boxing fans.

"When they saw 'Scrap Fighting Tonight' in the paper, they didn't care if I win, lose, or draw," Johnson says. "They just knew I'd put on a good show."

Sometimes he did better than that. They were building up a longshoreman named Jimmy Harryman for a fight with Quarry in 1966, and figured a victory over Scrap would cement the plan. Johnson blew that by stopping Harryman in nine rounds.

Over the years, he would do the same to such other prospects as Cookie Wallace, Bob "Pretty Boy" Feldstein, and Marty Franklin.

"I didn't fear no man," says Johnson. Not even the fearsome Liston, who Scrap says hit him harder than Foreman, Frazier, and everybody else he fought.

"At the sound of the bell I went dead at Sonny," he recalls of that 1969 night in Las Vegas. It probably wasn't the greatest strategy to employ against one of the best punchers in heavyweight history, and Liston, who'd held the title from 1962-'64, stopped Johnson in the seventh round, ending Scrap's six-fight winning streak.

(Continued on page 63)

SUMMARY

HEAVYWEIGHTS
Lennox Lewis W 10 Ray Mercer
Evander Holyfield KO 5 Bobby Czyz
Tim Witherspoon KO 5 Jorge Luis Gonzalez
Buster Mathis Jr. No-Decision 4 Obed Sullivan
Chris Byrd KO 8 Lionel Butler
Zeljko Mavrovic W 12 Christophe Bizot
Larry Donald W 10 Will Hinton
Nate Tubbs KO 1 Mike Dixon
Brian Nielsen KO 3 Salvador Maciel
Jose Ribalta KO 1 James Holley
Bonecrusher Smith KO 3 Troy Roberts
Vaughn Bean KO 1 Michael Benning
Melvin Foster KO 2 David Smith
David Dixon KO 3 Mauricio Villegas
Trevor Berbick KO 4 Kenny Smith
Peter McNeeley KO 2 Juan Quintana
Michael Grant KO 4 Olian Alexander
Courage Tshabalala W 8 Tim Noble
Jo-el Scott KO 3 Ron Carter
Butterbean KO 1 Richard Davis
Butterbean KO 4 Jonathan Whitfield

CRUISERWEIGHTS
Fabrice Tiozzo KO 6 Leslie Stewart *(Non-Title Bout)*
Torsten May KO 10 Andrew Maynard
Alexander Gurov KO 3 Pedro Franco
Carl Thompson KO 4 Albert Call
Chris Okoh KO 6 George Carmen
David Izeqwire KO 2 Jeff Williams
David Izeqwire KO 2 Exum Speight
Anthony Hembrick D 10 Terry McGroom
Dale Brown KO 2 Shawn Elliott

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS
Virgil Hill W 12 Lou Del Valle *(Retains WBA Title)*
James Toney KO 4 Earl Butler
Montell Griffin KO 4 Charles Scott
Dariusz Michalczewski KO 5 Asluddin Umarov
Graciano Rocchigiani W 10 Pietro Pelizzarro
Joe Silvuvangi W 12 Ole Klemetsen
Nicky Piper KO 2 Danny Juma

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Segundo Mercado W 10 Charles Smith
Rodney Toney D 12 Silvio Branco
Joe Calzaghe KO 5 Mark Delaney
Chris Johnson KO 3 Darron Griffiths
Mauricio Amaral KO 9 Reginaldo Andrade
Antoine Byrd KO 2 Roman Nunez
Robin Reid KO 1 Hunter Clay

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Lonnie Bradley W 12 Lonny Beasley
Jorge Castro KO 1 Sergio Medina
Robert McCracken KO 7 Paul Busby
Lupe Aquino W 10 Kenny Pratt

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Emmett Linton KO 4 Roberto Welin
Ahmet Dottuev KO 3 Patrick Vungbo
Ensley Bingham KO 6 Gary Logan
Wayne Powell W 10 Kevin Tillman

WELTERWEIGHTS
Skipper Kelp W 10 Adrian Stone
Adrian Stone KO 1 Miroslav Gregie
Hector Lopez KO 9 Des Ford
Jose Luis Navarro KO 2 Bojkov Borislaw
Craig Kikta W 12 Dwayne Swift
Ken Sigurani W 12 Rick McGill
Paul Denton KO 4 Ross Hale

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS
Khalid Rahilou W 8 Rodney Wilson
Rafael Ruelas KO 2 Tomas Barrientes
Vernon Forrest KO 1 Chris Slaughter
Soren Sondergaard W 12 Michele Piccirillo
Sharmba Mitchell KO 2 Gilberto Flores
Hector Quiroz KO 2 Russell Mosley

LIGHTWEIGHTS
Jean-Baptiste Mendy W 12 Lamar Murphy *(Wins Vacant WBC Title)*
Arturo Grigorjan KO 12 Antonio Rivera
John-John Molina W 10 Rocky Balboa
Calvin Grove KO 4 Lester Ellis
David Sample W 10 Armed Santos
Jose Vida Ramos W 8 Jose Figueroa
Marty Jakubowski W 8 Richie White
Tony Pep KO 3 Jorge Palomares
Angel Mona KO 6 Oscar Palomino

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS
Yong Soo Choi KO 8 Orlando Soto *(Retains WBA Title)*
Genaro Hernandez KO 5 Javier Pichardo
Chico Castillo KO 7 Jose Manjarrez
Julien Lorcy KO 3 Jose Diaz
Jorge Paez KO 6 Jose Sanabria
Louie Leija W 8 Roberto Avila
Troy Dorsey W 8 Hector Visencio
Javier Leon W 10 James Crayton
P.J. Gallagher KO 10 Davey McHale

FEATHERWEIGHTS
Tom Johnson KO 7 Claudio Martinet
(Retains IBF Title)
Manuel Medina W 10 Benito Rodriguez
Miguel Arrozal W 8 Felipe Garcia
Juan Manuel Marquez KO 8 Julio Gervacio
Victor Polo KO 9 Roberto Godoy
November Ntshingila No-Contest 1 Julian Wheeler

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHTS
Marco Antonio Barrera KO 3 Jesse Benavides
Kennedy McKinney W 12 John Lewus
Johnny Tapia KO 2 Ramon Gonzalez
Erik Morales KO 2 Lee Cargle
Jesse Magana W 12 Jose Ayala
Jesus Salud KO 8 Jose Montes
Nestor Garza W 10 Francisco Soto
Willie Jorrin KO 2 Juan Carlos Salazar

BANTAMWEIGHTS
Jorge Eliecer Julio W 12 Sergio Millan
Robbie Regan W 12 Daniel Jimenez
Daniel Jimenez KO 5 Alejandro Sanabria
Daorung Chuwatana W 10 Jess Maca
Victor Rabanales KO 5 Arturo Estrada

JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHTS
Alimi Goitia KO 5 Satoshi Iida
(Retains WBA Title)
Hiroshi Kawashima W 12 Cecilio Espino
(Retains WBC Title)
Harold Grey W 12 Carlos Salazar
(Regains IBF Title)
Jerry Penalosa KO 2 Insrithon Sor Thanikul
Polo Saucedo Tech. Dec. 6 Jesse Miranda
Samson Dutch Boy Gym KO 1 Luis Sosa

FLYWEIGHTS
Mark Johnson KO 1 Francisco Tejedor
(Wins Vacant IBF Title)
Enrique Orozco W 12 Oscar Arciniega
Raul Juarez KO 3 Juan Santos
Hiroki Ioka KO 2 Joel Nice
Jesper D. Jensen KO 2 Jose Quirino
Alexander Mahmutov W 12 Thumpetch M100

JUNIOR FLYWEIGHTS
Saman Sorjaturong KO 7 Joma Gamboa
(Retains WBC Title)

STRAWWEIGHTS
Chana Porpaoin W 10 Jerry Pahayahay
Nene Sanchez KO 5 Jose Luis Velarde
Juan Herrera KO 9 Alexander Miller

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RINGSIDE REPORTS

FIGHTER *of the* MONTH

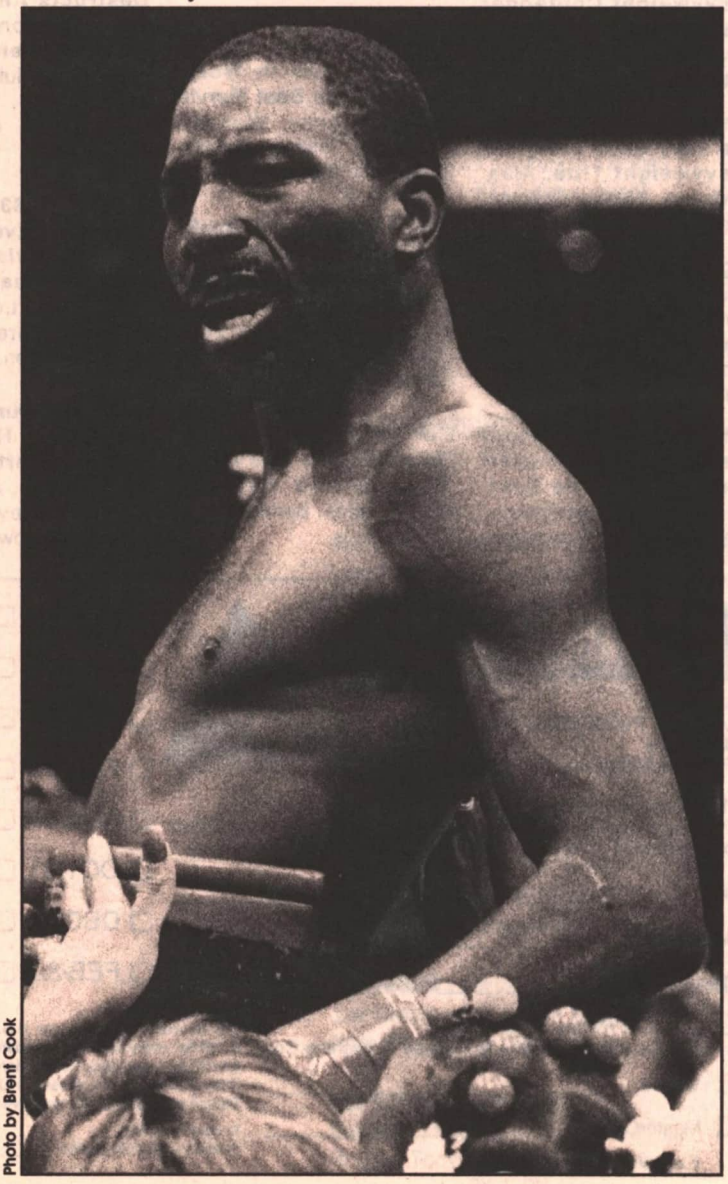

Photo by Brent Cook

Longtime flyweight contender Mark "Too Sharp" Johnson had Francisco Tejedor right where he wanted him, which was anywhere besides Colombia. Going into his battle with Johnson, Tejedor was 43-0 in his homeland and 0-4 on the road.

Make that 0-5.

Fighting for the vacant IBF 112-pound crown, Johnson and former titlist Tejedor clashed at the Arrowhead Pond in Anaheim, California, which reminds no one of Barranquilla, Colombia. One counter left from Johnson, a southpaw, and it was over, with Tejedor toppling for the count after only 95 seconds.

Said the 24-year-old Johnson, who became the first African-American to win a world flyweight title, "I waited a long time, and I wasn't gonna be denied."

We believe him—no matter where the fight was going to be held.

• • • •

Mark Johnson

Pernell Whitaker W 12 Wilfredo Rivera

St. Maarten: Something gained, something lost: Defending the WBC welterweight title for the sixth time, Whitaker kept his belt by scoring a split decision over mandatory challenger Rivera in the first-ever championship bout on this Caribbean island. In doing so, however, he forfeited whatever support remained regarding his claim to the title of boxing's best fighter, pound-for-pound. In fact, given "Sweet Pea's" lackluster performance, insiders have begun to seriously question his chances against co-champions Felix Trinidad and Ike Quartey.

After Quartey destroyed Vince Phillips in a punchathon on the undercard, the 32-year-old Whitaker, 147, Norfolk, Virginia, and Rivera, 147, Rio Piedras, Puerto Rico, fought a tactical, mostly boring fight. Whitaker didn't appear to be motivated or properly conditioned, and it showed. (In fact, the challenger's camp questioned whether "Sweet Pea" legitimately made weight.) He won most of the early rounds, but only because counterpuncher Rivera was too cautious. Perhaps the 26-year-old challenger's approach was affected by an unintentional butt-induced cut suffered on the left side of his forehead in round three. He bled throughout, and later said, "I was fighting with one eye." By the end, Whitaker, too, was marked, showing a mouse under his right eye and swelling over his left eye.

It was also in the third round that Rivera, 23-1-1 (14), who usually fights from an orthodox stance, first turned southpaw, and he fought left-handed most of the way. This largely neutralized the outstanding jab of Whitaker, 38-1-1 (16), and the champion was forced to rely on straight lefts.

Simply put, Rivera didn't do quite enough to win a very winnable fight. For instance, in the ninth round, he fired only 38 punches, and for the entire fight, his connect rate was only 28 percent. Tamotsu Tomihara (USA) and George St. Aude (Trinidad) scored for Whitaker by 117-112 and 115-113, respectively, while Barbara Perez (USA) had Rivera in front by 116-113. THE RING saw it even at 115-115.

"You guys are spoiled; you think I can't get hit," said Whitaker. "I always do the things I need to do."

"Regardless of the blood, I thought I won the fight," said Rivera.

The decision drew several protests, and three weeks after the bout, the WBC ordered an immediate rematch. That seems unnecessary; the bout was indeed close, but we'd hardly call the decision controversial.

The bout, along with Quartey-Phillips, was televised by HBO.

Promoter: Main Events

(4-12-96)

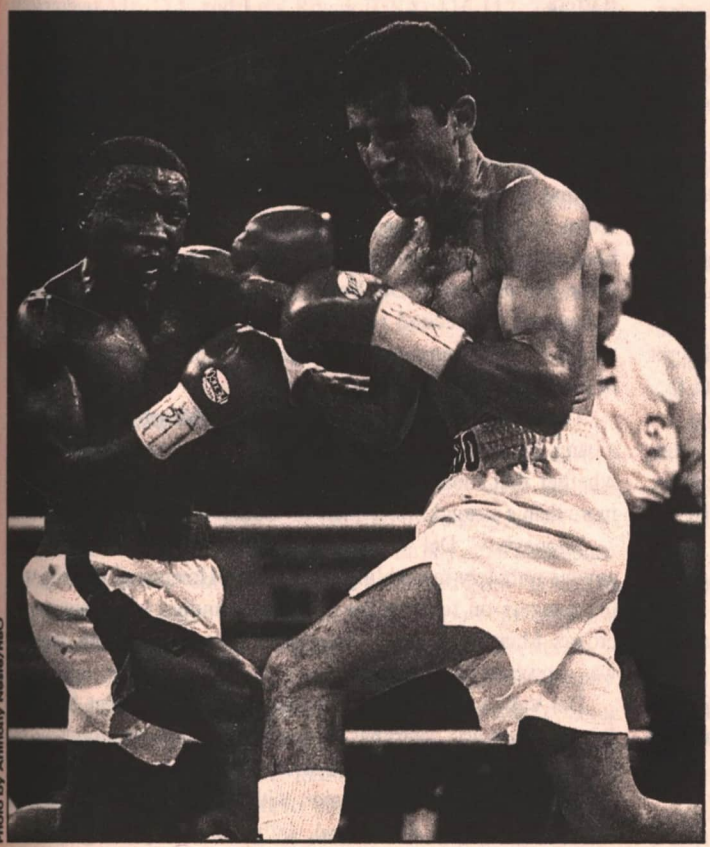

Photo by Anthony Neste/HBO

Whitaker-Rivera was a lot closer than expected

Ike Quartey KO 3 Vince Phillips

St. Maarten: Even though he had won the title from the highly skilled Crisanto Espana, the rap against WBA welterweight champion "Bazooka" Quartey has always been the level of his competition. Well, no longer can it be argued that he's never beaten anyone. Phillips, a 32-year-old veteran engaging in his first world title fight, was a legitimate top-10 contender, and, in Quartey's fourth defense, a threat to knock the crown off the champion's head.

Quartey, 147, Accra, Ghana, is known for wielding a destructive left hand, but he used his right to gun down Phillips, 147, Pensacola, Florida. The challenger, 33-2 (22), clearly had a game plan; he threw 115 punches in the first round and a staggering 129 in the second. The kamikaze attack failed to faze Quartey, 32-0 (28), who calmly stuck out his jab, kept a high guard, and looked to counter with straight rights and right uppercuts. A counter dropped Phillips late in the first, but referee Julio Cesar Alvarado (Panama) ruled no knockdown.

Quartey gained command in the second, at one point landing an eye-opening counter combination that included a straight right, a hook, a double-jab, and a right uppercut to the body. Phillips kept firing, but his strategy was backfiring; it was the challenger, and not the champion, who opened round three with swelling under his right eye. Two minutes into the round, a pair of rights drove Phillips backward, and Quartey chased him down. Phillips tried to hold, but the Ghanaian wouldn't allow it, and after shoving his foe into the ropes, he dropped him with a flurry. Phillips rose, then staggered, and after Quartey landed a couple of more punches, Alvarado called a halt at the 2:31 mark.

The judges were Washington Gonzalez (Chile), Orlando Sam (Panama), and Melchior Taylor (Trinidad).

"He was looking for the left; I used the right," said Quartey, who is hoping for bigger prey. "I want [WBC champion Pernell] Whitaker right now. I *know* I'm the best."

Whitaker might sense that, too, which is why "Sweet Pea" is far more likely to take on high-profile IBF champi-

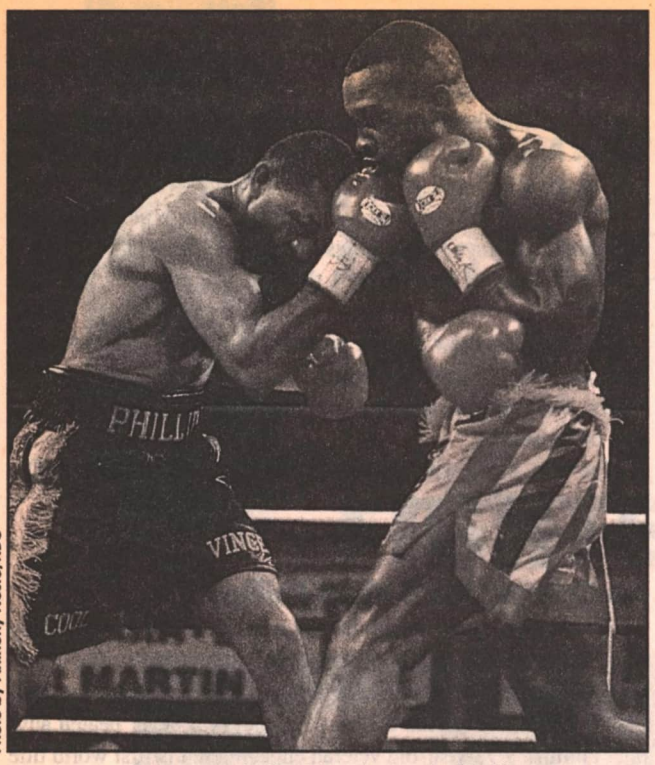

Photo by Anthony Neste/HBO

Quartey stood tall against the attack of Phillips

on Felix Trinidad instead. It's too bad, but at this point, Quartey, who remains largely unknown, represents the ultimate high-risk, low-reward fight.

Promoter: Main Events

(4-12-96)

Orzubek Nazarov KO 4 Adrianus Taroreh

Tokyo, Japan: Unbeaten lefty Nazarov defended the WBA lightweight title for the fifth time, crushing mandatory challenger Taroreh with left hands at Korakuen Hall. The time of the stoppage was 3:09.

The 29-year-old Nazarov, 135, a Japan-based Russian, applied pressure from the start, with former OPBF champion Taroreh, 135, Indonesia, occasionally answering with tricky rights, especially in round two. The 5'8" titlist enjoyed a four-inch height advantage, and he had little trouble reaching his 28-year-old foe. Oddly, whenever Taroreh landed, he offered a smile.

That smile disappeared for good late in the third, when Nazarov, 23-0 (17), connected with vicious lefts to the face. Taroreh, 12-1 (3), went down and was subsequently saved by the bell.

There was no respite in the fourth, with Nazarov attacking furiously. Strong lefts, thrown mostly in combination, produced a second knockdown. This time Taroreh, who fell face-first, stayed flat for several minutes.

The referee was Roberto Ramirez (Puerto Rico). The judges were Rodolfo Maldonado (Panama), Jesus Cova (Venezuela), and Hank Meijors (Netherlands).

Promoter: Kyoei Promotions

(4-15-96)

Joe Koizumi

Vuyani Bungu KO 2 Pablo Osuna

Hammanskraal, South Africa: Making his sixth defense of the IBF junior featherweight title, Bungu produced an excellent performance with calculated precision and seemingly effortless power to score a second-round kayo of mandatory challenger Osuna before an estimated crowd of 3,000 in a tent on the carpark at the Carousel gambling resort.

The southpaw Osuna, 121¼, Colombia, started off quite confidently, as he pushed out his jab. But Bungu, 121½, East London, South Africa, found his range midway through the opening round and began countering with sharp lefts and rights to the head. Thirty seconds before the end of the round, Bungu stunned Osuna with a hook to the jaw, and seconds later dropped him with a right. Osuna rose on shaky legs and took a mandatory count from referee Stanley Christodoulou (South Africa). The 29-year-old Bungu continued to land at will, but Osuna somehow managed to last until the bell.

Osuna, 10-3-2 (9), was still dazed at the start of the second, and the champion connected with a right to the chin that felled the Colombian in a heap against the ropes. When Osuna picked himself up, it was surprising that Christodoulou allowed the bout to continue. Bungu, 30-2 (17), stormed in, missing with a right, but scoring with a hook that again downed Osuna. Christodoulou immediately waved the bout over at the 39-second mark.

The judges were Pakamile Jacobs (South Africa), John Witt (USA), and Rocky Castellani (USA).

Afterward, promoter Rodney Berman said that Bungu has proved he's the best fighter in the division, and at this point, the only meaningful bout would be a showdown with Marco Antonio Barrera.

(4-15-96)

Ron Jackson

Virgil Hill W 12 Lou Del Valle

Grand Forks, North Dakota: Since his landmark loss to Thomas Hearns in 1991, WBA light heavyweight champion Hill seems to have given up all pretenses of greatness. Instead, he's been satisfied to carve out a niche in his home state against opposition like the upstart Del Valle. This time, Hill, making the ninth defense of his second reign, and the 20th overall, managed to escape with a unanimous but disputed decision at the University of North Dakota's Engelstad Arena.

The 32-year-old Hill's career appears destined to end not with a bang, but with a whimper. Only his next fight or two will reveal whether that moment has arrived, or whether this was nothing more than a struggle vs. a difficult southpaw style.

"Honeyboy" Del Valle, 175, Bronx, New York, hadn't faced anyone remotely resembling a contender. He entered the ring with his hangers-on tossing Bit-O-Honey candies to the unamused crowd. Many were tossed back, and after the decision, the ring was showered with them.

Del Valle's style could hardly be described as sweet, but in the first round, it was clear that his southpaw stance was throwing the classic boxing style of Hill, 174, Williston, North Dakota, awry. Del Valle cracked the champion with some straight lefts, but all seemed all right in the second, with Hill taking charge until he lunged amateurishly after a retreating Del Valle while trying to

close with a flourish. The 27-year-old challenger responded with a surprise left that sent Hill crashing. He arose quickly at the bell, but was more hurt than he readily appeared.

The shot at once established Del Valle in the fight and took him out of it. For the next seven rounds, he waited and waited, seemingly interested only in the jackpot. Hill, meanwhile, waved the jab, sent awkward, reaching rights to the body, and landed just enough pokes to the head. In the sixth, Hill, 42-1 (20), salvaged a weak round by staggering the challenger with a right just before the bell. It was both a dull (few solid blows) and interesting (clash of styles, difficult to score) bout, the kind of match that can be analyzed to death.

Del Valle, 22-1 (15), finally showed renewed aggression in the 10th, battering Hill with lefts. Hill's right eye became marked, which later contributed to the impression that he had been beaten. Action fizzled in the 11th, and both were tired and leaning on each other in the final session. Del Valle scored with the harder punches, but Hill landed more often, and two judges scored the 12th even.

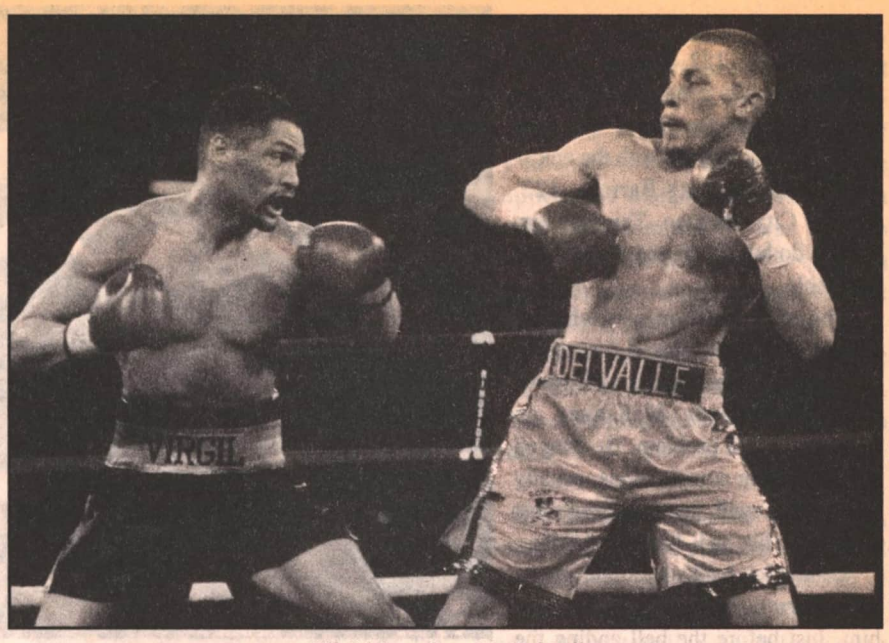

Photo by Tom Casino/HBO

Hill didn't peak against Del Valle

The crowd expected a Hill victory, but the challenger had provided a scare, so there was a collective sigh of relief when Harmodio Cedeno (Panama) scored 114-113, Manuel Rodriguez (Colombia) 116-114, and Luis Rivera (USA) 116-112. THE RING scored for Hill by 114-113. The referee was Hubert Earle (Canada).

"He's difficult to fight," Hill said of Del Valle. "With the stance he had, he was hard to hit."

Countered Del Valle, "I scored the harder punches, the sharper punches. He was hitting me with that pitty-pat jab. If the referees [sic] think the amateur style is the fight, well, that be it."

In fact, nobody won the fight. Hill just didn't lose it.

Promoter: Cedric Kushner Productions

(4-20-96)

J.R. Jowett

Jean-Baptiste Mendy W 12 Lamar Murphy

Levallois-Perret, France: Shaking off the years, as well as a less than convincing start, the 33-year-old Mendy upset the odds and won the vacant WBC lightweight title by boxing his way to a comprehensive unanimous decision over Murphy at an atmospheric Palais des Sports Marcel Cerdan. The title had been vacated by Miguel Angel Gonzalez, who has beaten both Mendy and Murphy. The Mexican is now competing at junior welterweight.

Fresher than the veteran southpaw, the 23-year-old Murphy, 134¼, Miami, Florida, appeared well in control over the opening three rounds. He pressured Mendy, 133, France, via Senegal, crouching low when the left-hander threatened to fire back. Inexplicably, Murphy changed his tactics in the fifth, opting instead, on instruction from his corner, to box at long range. It took only a minute or two for the long-armed Mendy to seize the initiative, and until the final bell he remained by and large in command.

Some solid combination-punching underpinned Murphy's pressure tactics in the first round, and Mendy struggled to keep the swarming American at bay. Maintaining this aggressive approach over the next couple of rounds, Murphy deprived Mendy leverage to land his punches, which were having little impact on the increasingly confident visitor. But a resolute effort in the fourth round by the southpaw, during which he connected with a stiff left that rocked Murphy and persuaded his cornermen to carry him back to his corner, precipitated a change in momentum.

Murphy, 18-2 (13), came to box in the fifth—and came off second-best. Mendy, 49-5-2 (30), reinforced the shift in fortunes in the seventh, driving in a three-punch combination through Murphy's open guard. And in the eighth he enjoyed stunning success with a sequence of left uppercuts.

Reduced to desperation tactics, Murphy switched to southpaw in the 10th, but against a natural left-hander, it was self-defeating. Murphy could not summon the energy in the final round to fashion the knockout he required, and the issue was beyond doubt.

John Keane (England) and Bob Logist (Belgium) both scored 117-112, while Juan Jose Guerra (Mexico) saw it 116-112. The referee was Mickey Vann (England).

Promoter: AB Stars Productions

(4-20-96)

Brian Doogan

Marco Antonio Barrera KO 3 Jesse Benavides

Anaheim, California: No surprises here, with the barnstorming Barrera walking right through a stiff, cautious, and outclassed Benavides in a pay-per-view-televised junior featherweight scrap before a crowd of 5,877 at the Arrowhead Pond.

At 32, veteran southpaw Benavides is 10 years older than Barrera, but he's had only five more fights. As a result, the fight pitted Benavides' age and experience against Barrera's youth and

experience.

Benavides, 122, Corpus Christi, Texas, is usually comfortable fighting inside, but from the start it was clear he didn't want to trade with the quicker, harder-punching Barrera, 122, Mexico City, Mexico. This left him little to do but watch and wait for the inevitable.

The only question was whether Barrera could get himself focused so soon after his spectacular 12th-round kayo of Kennedy McKinney on February 3. No problem. He banged away with big combinations, usually starting with swift, thumping hooks that swooped in like an F-14 surgical strike.

Benavides backed up and away, with Barrera walking calmly after him. Just before the bell ending the first round, The "Baby-Faced Assassin" caught up to Benavides in a corner and damaged him with a up-and-down series of hooks that almost resulted in a knockdown.

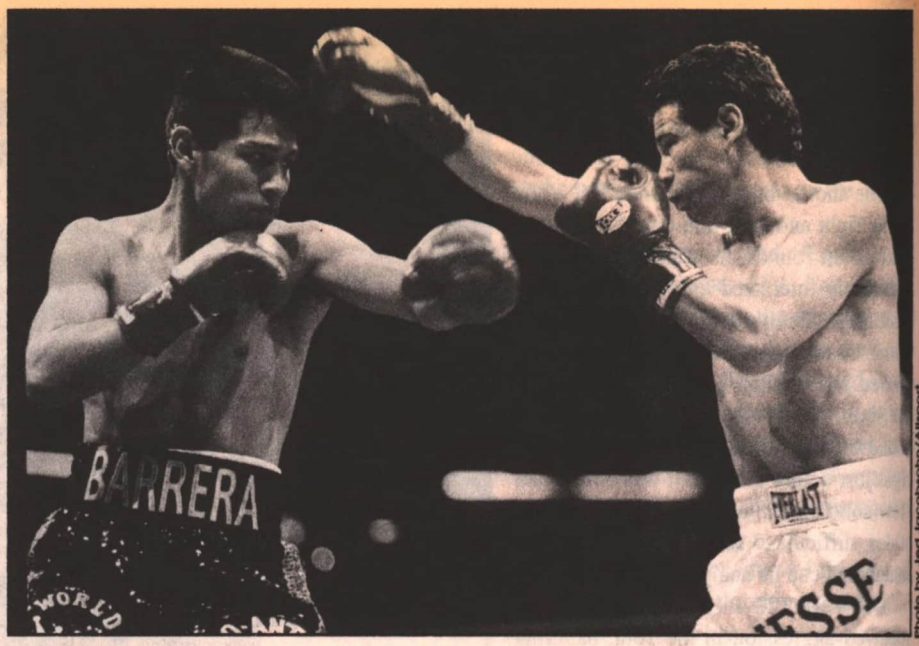

Photo by Jed Jacobsohn/Allsport

Benavides shot BBs at Barrera

In the second, Benavides, 40-5-1 (25), countered with some good bodyshots of his own. But when Barrera answered with a right, it looked, sounded, and must have felt like the punch of a heavyweight. "He really hurt my body on the second," acknowledged Benavides.

One minute into the third, Barrera, 41-0 (29), came in with a quick left uppercut and followed with a hook to the body. Wincing in pain, Benavides sank to the canvas. Referee Lou Moret (USA) counted him out at the 1:15 mark. It was only the second kayo loss of the Texan's career; in 1988, he had been halted by Pedro Decima.

The judges were Marty Denkin (USA), Ismael Fernandez (Puerto Rico), and Harold Lederman (USA).

"I couldn't do anything against Barrera," said Benavides. "I wanted to take him past the sixth and seventh round, into deep water, but he was too strong for me."

Barrera, who clearly enjoys performing, said he was disappointed the fight didn't last a few more rounds. "But," he added, "I expected to win by knockout."

Question: Why was this on pay-per-view? With his talent, Barrera deserves a following. But if he wants to build a fan base, he should take care to make at least some of his fights more accessible.

Promoter: Forum Boxing

(5-4-96)

Ivan G. Goldman

Tom Johnson KO 7 Claudio Martinet

Cap D'Antibes, France: Significantly more dominant than in his recent fights, IBF featherweight champion Johnson retained the title for the 10th time, dealing severely with the overmatched but incredibly game Martinet and knocking him cold at Epace Piscine.

The closing sequence was vintage Johnson, as a spent Martinet sustained five powerful rights to the head before crashing to the boards, where he was counted out by referee Max Parker (USA) at the 38-second mark of the seventh. He had offered much resistance prior to that, as the fight developed into target practice for the gifted American.

In his previous defenses, Johnson, 31, had survived wars with Jose Badillo and Ever Beleno. Here, he was much more convincing, and afterward issued another challenge to the prodigious young English talent, "Prince" Naseem Hamed. But Hamed's promoter, Frank Warren, maintains that an offer made to Johnson by his Sports Network organization was rejected. The game of cat-and-mouse continues outside the ropes.

It was cat-and-mouse at the beginning of this one, too, as neither Johnson, 126, Detroit, Michigan, nor the 31-year-old Martinet, 126, Sante Fe, Argentina, were willing to take chances. Martinet opened up in the third and quickly paid for his aggressiveness. A five-punch salvo, punctuated by a right hand, clinically deposited the Argentine veteran on the canvas. He rose at the count of six, but remained groggy for the remainder of the round and was grateful when the bell sounded 30 seconds later.

Proving his mettle, Martinet, 44-6-2 (22), attempted a revival in the fourth and landed a left that got Johnson's attention. He boxed effectively to claim the fifth, but Johnson, 43-2-1 (25), emphatically took the sixth, a session that began Martinet's demise.

A swift left followed by a sizzling burst from the champion seriously hurt Martinet and eventually forced him down. Again he beat the count, but this time he was clearly in dire straits. He lasted out the remaining time, but had nothing left to offer in the seventh.

The judges were Bernie Cormier (Canada), Lawrence Wallace (USA), and Andre Ducrocq (France).

Promoter: Don King, in association with Roger Ferrer

(4-26-96)

Brian Doogan ■

Olympians

(Continued from page 37)

Thumbnail sketches of the remainder of the U.S. Olympic boxing team:

106 pounds: Albert Guardado, 22, Topeka, Kansas: The smallest member of the U.S. delegation made the team in a big way. USA Boxing's top-ranked light flyweight was one of only two boxers who successfully challenged at the Box-Offs in Augusta, Georgia. Two weeks earlier, at the Trials in Oakland, California, Guardado had been surprised by Jauquin Gallardo. The 5'6" Guardado twice defeated Gallardo to secure his berth. "It was a dream of mine for 11 years," says Guardado, who is a student at Washburn University. He has a lot of international experience, but reaching the medal round won't be easy.

112 pounds: Eric Morel, 20, Madison, Wisconsin: The flyweight, ranked second nationally, didn't exactly soar over top-ranked Ramases Patterson. Morel won a 16-15 heartbreaker in the finals of the championship bracket at the Trials, then the two battled to a 15-15 tie at the Box-Offs, with Morel winning a disputed 43-41 tiebreaker, after which Patterson claimed, "They already knew who they wanted to be on the Olympic team." Morel competed in the 1992 Junior World Championships for Puerto Rico. He has registered mixed results at the international level. A dart-and-retreat artist, he is, at times, overly cautious. He seems acutely aware that the electronic scoring system rewards boxers who land single, clean shots, often in the form of counterpunches.

119 pounds: Zahir Raheem, 19, Philadelphia: Raheem is one of a trio of Olympic boxers from Philly. Immediately after his Box-Offs triumph, the bantamweight with the Muslim name (Zahir means "the maker") exclaimed to a (perpetually) perplexed media, "I'd like to give thanks to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, because without Him it wouldn't be possible." *Hmmm.* Later, Raheem's father, Eric Roach, explained that he had converted to Islam years ago when his son was born, only later to become a Christian. Regardless, Raheem is not much of a puncher. Though sought by Main Events, he's a longshot to medal.

125 pounds: Floyd Mayweather, 19, Grand Rapids, Michigan: If the name sounds familiar, that's because the sleek featherweight is the son of '70s and '80s welterweight contender Floyd Mayweather, who is serving 66 months in a federal prison for drug trafficking. The Olympian-to-be punches more like his uncle, former two-division world champion Roger Mayweather. The amateur Mayweather may be, pound-for-pound, the most talented boxer on the U.S. team, and looks to be the best pro prospect. He had to twice win at the Box-Offs against Trials champion Augustine Sanchez. His father continues to advise him by telephone from prison. "My dad believed in me totally," he says. Mayweather likes to throw hard and often. He combines fast hands and reflexes with first-rate defensive skills and can box orthodox or southpaw. He's a handful in a very competitive international weight class. Mayweather has been heavily courted by Emanuel Steward.

132 pounds: Terrance Cauthen, 19, Philadelphia: Originally from Trenton, New Jersey, Cauthen has trained at Joe Frazier's gym for nine years, and has worked construction jobs to support his wife and family. "It was worth all the sweat and pain—I made it," he says. "Philadelphia has the best fighters in the world." A few other boxers may have something to say about that, say Cuba's Arnaldo Mesa or Bulgaria's Serafim Todorov. Like many of the young team's internationally inexperienced boxers, Cauthen will need a favorable blind draw to make the same kind of noise Rocky once did in Philly.

139 pounds: David Diaz, 19, Chicago: Not a fancy dancer like some of his more naturally gifted teammates, this scrappy kid poured out buckets of guts to make the squad. His skills need further refinement, but the light welterweight applies constant pressure that often wears down his opposition. He gave Hector Vinent of Cuba a fistful of fits in a 1995 bout during which he dropped the world champion, even though Diaz admitted he was "a little intimidated." His bore-in style is not in vogue with international judges, but like most fighters, don't expect him to modify what's worked—even for the Olympics. "I love a good fight," he says. "I like watching them, I like being in them."

156 pounds: David Reid, 22, Philadelphia: The concern about this light middleweight was the condition of his left eye following the Box-Offs. Coach Al Mitchell, who helped raise Reid, emphasized that the boxer has a problem with a muscle in the eyelid, and not the eyeball. He'll need three months of recovery after surgery, so Reid won't undergo an operation until after the Games. He has, at times, had difficulty avoiding right hands since being staggered at the 1995 Pan-Am Games. He moved up a year ago from welterweight, where Cuba's Juan Hernandez rules supreme. (Reid lost to Hernandez in '93 and '94.) Top Rank wants to sign Reid, a cousin of former contenders Boogaloo Watts and Jimmy Young.

165 pounds: Rhoshii Wells, 19, Riverdale, Georgia: This middleweight seems one of the team's weakest links. Veteran amateur Ronald Simms, 32, failed in his third and final bid to make the Olympic team by losing to Wells, a light puncher who has precious little international experience. Wells, who moved from Texas to Georgia several years ago, began boxing at Evander Holyfield's gym, only to discover the former heavyweight champion rarely appeared. "But then he heard about me and invited me to his house," says Wells. In the amateurs, Cuba's Ariel Hernandez remains the squire at this weight.

178 pounds: Antonio Tarver, 27, Orlando, Florida: Tarver offers the USA its best shot at mining gold in Atlanta. After overcoming a drug-infest-

ed youth that saw him drift from the sport, it may seem a simple task. The cocksure 178-pound southpaw had an incredible 1995, collecting gold medals at the Pan-Am Games, the U.S. Championships, and the World Championships, defeating Cuba's Diosvany Vega, ranked second internationally, three times en route. Tarver has mastered the electronic scoring system with a defensive-oriented style predicated upon movement and a strong jab. His chin remains suspect. "Sugar Ray Leonard had great instincts, and Ali was probably the smartest competitor ever. So I take what I can from their styles and try to apply them to mine," Tarver says. That'll work.

201 pounds: Nate Jones, 23, Chicago: Jones was lounging around, watching a tiny black-and-white television, when he suddenly saw a vision. He eyed Montell Griffin, a fellow Chicagoan, fighting at the 1992 Olympic Trials. This provided motivation, but there was one problem: Jones was in prison, serving a 20-month sentence for armed robbery and auto theft. He eventually scrambled to his feet, and though he again found trouble on a drug charge, he began, with the help of coach Tom O'Shea, trying to fight his way out of the Cabrini-Green housing projects. "You can pull yourself out of the dirt and make something of yourself; you don't have to be a product of your environment," Jones says. He has good skills and an average punch, and he's probably too green for the world's top amateur heavyweights. The former convict will need some real breaks to break out in Atlanta.

201-plus: Lawrence Clay-Bey, 30, Hartford, Connecticut: Everyone loves a super heavyweight, and what's there not to like about a guy with a wife and three kids who works full-time as a youth corrections officer? Clay-Bey (the name is Moorish) didn't begin boxing until he was 26. It was a means of melting off pounds. He quickly progressed into the nation's top-ranked super heavy, a division devoid of superior talent. He can punch with either hand, as he showed when he shifted to southpaw and kayoed Joseph Mesi with a right hook in the Box-Offs. He has deceptively quick hands and feet. He stunned Alexei Lezin of Russia, ranked first internationally, in the World Championships in '95. Some observers predict a bronze medal in Atlanta, but Clay-Bey must work on his conditioning. At the youth institute in Cheshire, Connecticut, the young dudes call him "C.O. Tyson," but this guy is a commanding officer and a gentleman. "I don't know if they look up to me as Mike Tyson," he says modestly, "but it's a good relationship." ■

Jon Saraceno will cover boxing at the Olympics for USA Today and Mutual Radio.

Pernell Whitaker

(Continued from page 39)

rating incrementally until there's nothing left. Then there are those who manage to forestall the inevitable, rededicating themselves after a particularly poor performance, and momentarily recapturing the glory of their youth, before finally giving way to the inexorable march of time.

A fighter's style can also play a major role in how the latter part of his career unfolds. Even when nearly finished, a big puncher can sometimes salvage victory with a single, well-placed shot. On the other hand, will-o'-the-wisp types who rely exclusively on hand and foot speed suddenly become easy targets after losing half a step. It is frequently the all-around craftsmen, the master boxers, who are the most successful in delaying the inevitable. Because they have utilized their intelligence as much as their natural ability throughout their careers, the degeneration of physical prowess is not such a crippling occurrence.

It is this third category that is of greatest interest when trying to evaluate Whitaker's status. Although quickness has always been an important part of his game, it has been his remarkable boxing skills that have carried him to world championships in four different divisions. And though he was never a runner in the strictest sense, as the years have gone by, Whitaker has become more and more adept at minimizing his lateral movement while still making his opponents miss.

Often, we never know exactly how great a fighter's resources are until the onset of corporeal deterioration. By the time he fought Joe Frazier the first time, three years of inactivity had robbed Muhammad Ali of a large degree of his once-supernatural speed. And after "Smokin' Joe" knocked him down and handed the self-proclaimed "Greatest" his first pro defeat, there was no shortage of critics ready to write him off as a has-been.

"He [Ali] will be back," wrote syndicated columnist Jim Murray. "But it will never be the same. An era has ended. He is, for once, at one with [Jack] Dempsey in the rain at Philadelphia in 1926, [Jack] Johnson in the sun in Havana in 1914, [Joe] Louis on the ring apron, his balding head glaring in the television mirror in 1951."

Equating Ali's loss to Frazier with what were, for all intent and purposes, career-ending defeats was certainly overstating the case. Still, Murray was right about one thing: Ali would never be the same. Nonetheless, with a fighter as creative as Ali, there are endless ways to compensate for what has been lost in terms of speed and agility. What seemed like a catastrophic defeat proved a catalyst for change, allowing Ali to evolve into a complete fighter. He discovered the advantages of pacing, the Ali shuffle slowly giving way to the rope-a-dope, and courage and durability eventually replaced evasiveness.

Although the pivotal point was not nearly as dramatic as it was for Ali, Larry Holmes is another example of a fighter who prolonged his career (and title reign) by emphasizing craftsmanship and guile when age began to take its toll. The first sign that Holmes, then 33, was starting to slip came in May '83, in what was anticipated to be a routine defense. Challenger Tim Witherspoon had only 15 pro fights to Holmes' 43, but fought so well that many observers thought he did enough to take the title. When Holmes prevailed via split decision, the naysayers pounced.

"There was general agreement over one point on this controversial night," wrote Bill Verigan in the New York *Daily News*. "There was agreement that Holmes is very near the end of his career."

Not only wasn't Holmes anywhere near the end of his career (wasn't it just last week that ol' Larry was on *Tuesday Night Fights?)*, but he managed to hang on to the title for more than two additional years. This is not to say that "The Easton Assassin" that scraped by Witherspoon was the same fighter who won the title from Ken Norton in June '78. Clearly, he wasn't. But as subsequent events proved, the reports of Holmes' demise were decidedly premature.

It's not only heavyweights that are periodically consigned to the scrap heap while they still have plenty of fights left in them. It's just as true for fighters at the other end of the scale. Panama's Hilario Zapata, another slick, enterprising boxer, was dismissed as a shot fighter numerous times during his 16-year (1977-1993) career. Yet he won and lost the WBC light flyweight title twice and also had a long run as WBA flyweight champion. All told, he was 18-5-1 in world title fights. Not bad for a powder-puff puncher who was first considered finished after a two-round kayo loss to Amado Ursua in 1982, or less than halfway through his lengthy series of title fights.

For a more recent example, we have to look no further than WBC super featherweight champion Azumah Nelson, who has shown a remarkable ability to bounce back whenever his critics assure us he's through. They said the man from Ghana was washed-up when he was the beneficiary of a controversial draw with Jeff Fenech in June '91. But the obituary writers were forced to eat their keyboards when Nelson, a huge underdog who was fighting on his opponent's turf, knocked out Fenech in a rematch.

There were further rumblings of impending disaster when another debatable draw enabled Nelson to hold on to the belt against Jesse James Leija in September '93. And when Leija won the title in a rematch, the detractors were *positive* Nelson's championship days were over. But Nelson doesn't call himself "The Professor" for nothing. Despite the fact that he's an extremely dangerous puncher, he's also an astute tactician, capable of capitalizing on any weakness, physical or mental, his adversary exhibits. When given the opportunity to regain the belt against Gabe Ruelas last December, the 37-year-old veteran fooled the experts once again, knocking out his 26-year-old foe in the fifth round.

Of course, not all early-warning signals turn out to be false alarms. After winning two of three in his title-swapping series with Emile Griffith, Italy's Nino Benvenuti seemed firmly entrenched as middleweight champion. Even a non-title defeat to Dick Tiger in May 1969 didn't appear all that ominous, because even though Tiger was at the end of his career, he was recognized as a true great. After that points loss, Benvenuti retained the title twice, by disqualification over Fraser Scott and come-from-behind kayo of Luis Rodriguez. Then "The Bomb" dropped.

In March 1970, Tom "The Bomb" Bethea was a tough, hard-luck clubfighter who had lost his last four bouts before journeying to Melbourne, Australia, to meet the 31-year-old Benvenuti in a non-title bout. The unheralded New Yorker punished the favorite with a strong body attack, flooring him in the seventh round with a left to the head and a right to the body. When the bell rang for the start of the eighth, Benvenuti, complaining of a rib injury, told the referee he couldn't continue. It was the first time in 84 pro starts he'd been stopped.

At the time, the popular opinion was that Benvenuti had taken Bethea lightly, and when he stopped his rival in a title fight rematch two months later, it seemed to confirm this excuse. But even though Benvenuti had always been a fighter who was more comfortable using his brain than his brawn, he was unable to use his cerebral assets to prolong his tenure as 160-pound champion. By November '70, he was an *ex*-champion, having suffered a vicious knockout at the hands of Carlos Monzon. In Benvenuti's case, the defeats against an

(Continued on page 56)

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Pernell Whitaker

(Continued from page 55)

over-the-hill Tiger and the unexceptional Bethea turned out to be accurate indicators that the end was near.

Every so often, there's a case where you can't be sure what the real story is. In the early-'80s, WBA bantamweight champion Jeff Chandler seemed headed for the Hall of Fame. An aggressive, well-schooled boxer who punched in stinging combinations, he had already racked up seven defenses when his unbeaten streak unexpectedly came to an end in a non-title fight with Oscar Muniz.

It wasn't just the fact that Muniz had beaten him that perturbed Chandler's supporters; it was the way "Joltin' Jeff" had behaved during the bout. The 27-year-old Philadelphian made himself look foolish, showboating, sticking out his tongue, and taunting Muniz while getting beaten to the punch on a regular basis. The crowd turned on Chandler, and he was widely criticized for his unseemly conduct.

Insiders had been concerned about Chandler's outside-the-ring activities ever since June 1981, when he'd been busted for possession of marijuana and cocaine. The champion got off with six months probation, but questions lingered. Was Chandler's personal life starting to catch up with him in the ring?

Four months after the Muniz debacle, Chandler gave the Californian a rematch with the title on the line and turned in one of the best performances of his career. Twenty-three seconds into the seventh round, Muniz, blood streaming down his face, was rescued to spare him further punishment.

"That loss brought me back to my senses," said Chandler. "It woke me up."

But did it?

Chandler's next fight, in April 1984, turned out to be his last. Not only did relatively unknown Richard Sandoval take the title by 15th-round TKO, but Chandler received another jolt after undergoing eye surgery to remove a traumatic cataract a few months later.

"He definitely shouldn't fight anymore," said Dr. Richard Ellis, who performed the procedure. "Not only shouldn't he fight—anyone who has that type of surgery should not even rub their eye hard."

Was Chandler's rapid and unexpected downfall due to an eye condition, a dubious lifestyle, or nothing more than the rigors of the ring catching up with him? Maybe all three were responsible. One thing's for sure: The loss to Muniz foreshadowed the events that were to follow.

So what do the careers of these fighters, all of whom were, like Whitaker, more boxers than punchers, teach us about Sweet Pea? Will he regroup and prolong his career like Ali, Holmes, Zapata, and Nelson? Or was the Rivera

(Continued on page 58)

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Pernell Whitaker

(Continued from page 56)

fight the harbinger of doom?

While no two cases are identical, the guess here is that we can learn something about Whitaker's situation from what happened to Benvenuti and Chandler. Like Benvenuti when he lost to Tiger, a long career could be finally catching up with Whitaker. And like Chandler, he may be partying too much. Whitaker has been involved in two scuffles with the police this year, one at a bar in Pensacola, Florida, and the other in a hotel in San Antonio. It's not the sort of activity that usually indicates an athlete is concentrating on his craft.

The WBC has arbitrarily ordered Whitaker to give Rivera an immediate rematch. Providing he prepares properly, he should prevail in a much more convincing manner the second time around. But after that, with such outstanding fighters as Felix Trinidad, Ike Quartey, and Terry Norris jockeying to get a piece of him, Whitaker's future looks uncertain. It's not lunchtime quite yet, but tell those buzzards to stick around. It won't be long now. ■

Lennox Lewis

(Continued from page 42)

Mercer tried to do the same, but the 6'5" Lewis stood tall in one of the best heavyweight fights in recent memory. Despite a hot-and-cold career, the 35-year-old Mercer remains a threat for the two simplest of reasons: He can punch, and he can take a punch. "Ray Mercer's a tough guy," understated Lewis. "You hit him and he keeps coming."

The bout began innocently enough, with Mercer, 236, Newark, New Jersey, starting and finishing the first round with potent powerpunches. He was accurate throughout, landing 59 percent of his shots. If he made a mistake, it was in largely neglecting Lewis' body. He went for a one-punch knockout, but never even scored a knockdown.

Lewis, 247, East London, England, rebounded to capture the second, but not in the manner we might have expected him to. Armed with a six-inch reach advantage, he relied on crosses and uppercuts, and not jabs, to slow Mercer's charges. In fact, he was outjabbed from opening to closing bell. According to Steward, that had everything to do with the fact that when he jabs, Lewis carries his right hand by his chest, and not his face. As a result, he's not in position to parry his opponent's jab. Like we said, he's not technically superior. More like a work-in-progress.

The fourth was the first special round, and the crowd responded as if it were 1971, and the heavyweights trading punches were Ali and Frazier. One minute in, Lewis hammered Mercer with a right uppercut, and shortly after, he proved he's a Tyson-watcher by connecting with "Iron Mike's" pet combination, a right to the body and a right uppercut. After he added another right, it was Mercer's turn. "Merciless Ray" responded with a left-right and a second right, then scored with a right uppercut of his own. Encouraged, he let loose with a volley of blows, only to back to the ropes when Lewis countered with a three-punch combination, arguably his best of the fight. Two more punches came from Mercer before the bell. Lewis returned to his corner with a swollen left eye. He was proving his mettle, all right, but at what price?

The fifth, which was close, and the sixth both belonged to Mercer, and the crowd began chanting, "U-S-A! U-S-A!" With one minute remaining in the sixth, another stanza in which the fighters traded momentum, Mercer drove Lewis to the ropes with a pair of rights and a thudding hook. The Englishman covered up well, but there was no escaping the onslaught that came between rounds. "You're behind on points," Steward screamed at Lewis. "He's outpunching you, it's that simple. When you get a guy with a good volley like that, you've *got* to come back and win that round back. He was exhausted after that, but you never pushed him after that. Let the shots go!"

Lewis listened—sort of. Trailing by two points on THE RING'S card, he swept the last four rounds, with Mercer's lack of consistent activity a contributing factor.

The fighters traded fiercely in the seventh. This time it was Lewis, 29-1 (24), who finished faster, and Mercer, 23-4-1 (16), returned to his corner bleeding from a torn bottom lip. Lewis was busier in the eighth, and Mercer bled from the nose in the quiet ninth. Before the start of the 10th and final round, referee Arthur Mercante Jr. summed up the prevailing sentiment when, as the fighters touched gloves, he said, "Let's go! Who wants it?"

As it turned out, two of the three judges scored the 10th for Lewis, who, like his weary opponent, was largely ineffective over the last three minutes. The round proved to be pivotal, with Luis Rivera and George Colon scoring for Lewis by 96-95 and 96-94, respectively, and Melvina Lathan 95-95. THE RING had Lewis in front by 96-94.

"I felt I was comfortably ahead," said Lewis. "Ray was using that old trick of rallying at the end of rounds."

"I thought I won the fight," said Mercer. "I know I gave a couple of rounds away, but that's it, no more than three."

Most of the fans agreed with the first statement, but then again, their allegiance had been stated early on, when they booed Lewis upon his ring entrance.

Afterward, Lewis and his handlers tried their best to create a positive spin. Some of their points were well-taken. Lewis had indeed gone 10 demanding rounds for the first time in 30 bouts, and Mercer, flaunting the best chin in the division, had fought about as well as was possible.

But wasn't Lewis trying too hard when he said, "I think it's great preparation [for a showdown with Tyson]; that's why I took the Ray Mercer fight"? Something tells us that if, knowing he was on the verge of the biggest payday of his career, Lewis sensed that his "preparation" was going to be a life-and-death 10-rounder, he would've avoided Mercer as if the heavyweight carried every communicable disease known to mankind.

And wasn't Steward trying too hard when he stated, "I always said Ray Mercer would be a tougher fight than Tyson"? It was no coincidence that the boss of the Kronk, who is among the most keen and shrewd handlers in the game, was quoted within earshot of Lewis.

Maybe, just maybe, Team Lewis needs to convince itself of its chances against

Tyson before it convinces the rest of us. Or, to put it another way, the reporter wasn't the only one in that dressing room wondering about what Tyson might do to Lewis. ■

New Faces

(Continued from page 16)

terms. It's really too bad he chooses to ignore his emerald-in-the-rough background. He was practically marinated in Irish stew. His parents, Bill and Linda Irwin, now separated, are of Irish descent. His amateur coach, Irishman Pat Kelly, showed him the ropes at the Shamrock Boxing Club at Niagara Falls, Ontario, when he started boxing at age 14.

As a pro, Irwin has hooked up with Irish-born James Jardine, who runs a successful transport company in Toronto. Jardine serves as his manager and promoter. Irwin's trainer, Patrick Connaughton, who used to work with fringe junior lightweight contender Tony Pep, was also born on the Emerald Isle. Now based in the bigger media market of Toronto, Irwin fights out of the Cabbagetown Boxing Club, the very same organization that produced the once-highly touted Irish-Canadian Shawn O'Sullivan.

Irwin's scene is definitely green, but the fighter is having none of it.

"I won't go the Irish angle," says Irwin, 27, who hopes to challenge IBF lightweight champion Philip Holiday later this year. "I don't know. It's too gimmicky. Other people have done it. I think American promoters can look at me, and that's good enough.

"The Irish background will work in Ireland, New York, or Boston," adds Irwin, who knows full well Las Vegas and Atlantic City are where big-time careers are molded and maintained. "They can look at the blond hair and blue eyes. I don't look like a fighter to begin with, and they can use my looks anywhere."

A pragmatist and a puncher, Irwin deems himself a crowd-pleaser. Upon first viewing, he's right. Either live or on television, he is the kind of fighter crowds are naturally drawn to: He's a straight-ahead, all-business banger who attacks the body and head in equal measure. If the knockout comes, he takes it, as 11 kayos in 17 pro fights attests to. But his style is much like that of Mexican legend Julio Cesar Chavez: wear the opponent down with a relentless body attack, and then go to the head in the later rounds. A busy lumberjack, basically. His money punch is a left hook to the body.

Unlike Chavez, though, the 5'6½" Irwin is not a great finisher. "Punch and pause" seems to be his motto, and that's something that will have to change if he takes on the likes of Holiday. Like Irwin, the South African champion likes to rumble, and, like Irwin, he has a pretty solid chin.

"Billy's an excellent young man, a clean-cut Canadian kid," Jardine says of Irwin, who lives comfortably in Toronto, spending his spare time competing on the tennis court and playing with his pet pit bull Vegas. "In all the time I've spent with him, I've never heard him swear once. He doesn't do drugs and doesn't get into trouble with the law.

"However, there are still many things to work on. Billy still has a lot to learn. In his recent fight against Juan Sanchez, he let Sanchez off the hook over and over again. He hit Sanchez with shots that hurt him, but then sort of stepped back, waiting for Sanchez to fall. Now what we're trying to do is make any opponent fighting Billy Irwin to feel he is fighting in a phone booth. And that no matter where he goes, Billy will be there.

"We want to take advantage of the hard punch Billy has. And when we look south of the border, we feel Billy can beat any of the boxers out there in the lightweight division."

Irwin and Jardine have targeted Holiday because, according to Jardine, "He's there all the time. And we don't think Holiday is a particularly hard puncher. If I was in the Holiday camp, I don't think I'd be too anxious to take on Billy Irwin and his punching power."

Still, before he can take on a world champion, Irwin will have to make fur-

(Continued on page 60)

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New Faces

(Continued from page 59)

ther adjustments.

"Number one, Billy needs a lot more head movement," says Jardine. "He's straight-up quite a bit and uses his gloves to block punches. We want him to go underneath punches, as opposed to blocking them. Number two, we want him to cut the ring off a lot faster. We're teaching him new punches and footwork for this."

These are the things Irwin failed to catch on to before turning pro. Highlights of his amateur career include a bronze medal at the 1991 Pan-Am Games and a quarterfinal appearance at the 1992 Olympic Games in Barcelona. He lost to Filipino Ronald Chavez in that match—"he just ran around the ring"—and finished with a record of 127-20 (60). He turned pro in February '93, notching a first-round kayo of Charles McClelland.

Getting paid to trade punches was a dream come true.

"I'm better suited for the pros," says an obviously enthused Irwin, whose younger brother Mike fights in the amateurs and whose cousin Mark Irwin recently joined Jardine's professional stable. "I like the rumbling style of the pros. I'll be honest—I'm a fighter. Southpaws and runners aren't for me. Put somebody in front of me and I'll fight them. That's what I like."

With his feet firmly planted, Irwin knows what he wants, and how he wants it.

"I'm stickin' at lightweight," he says. "I'm a natural lightweight. Strong for my size. Like Marvin Hagler stayed at middleweight all those years, I can see myself being like that. And I have no idols. I have no inspiration, just myself.

"My dream is to win one of the world titles and defend it successfully for the rest of my career. I want to fight three or four more years—and never, ever have to work nine-to-five."

As we went to press, Irwin was to undergo surgery to repair slight retinal tears in both eyes. Assuming the surgery is successful, it is anticipated he'll be back in the ring by late-summer for a Commonwealth title bout with the world-rated David Tetteh.

For now, Irwin is happy fighting five or six times a year under Jardine's guidance. But don't make the mistake of assuming some of those fights are going to come in the USA.

"There have been approaches from other promoters in the States," says Jardine, who speaks with paternal care about his charge. "And if the offer is good, we'll take it. We'll even talk options on Billy's future fights, but the deal has to be what's best for Billy.

"Remember, Billy's my main man."■

Warren Tasker is a boxing columnist for the Edmonton (Alberta) Journal.

Rocky Turns 20

(Continued from page 23)

the screenplay did—with Rocky taking a dive. Luckily for boxing, which had seen enough of those kinds of dramas, he

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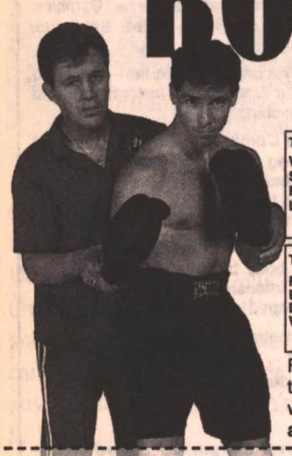

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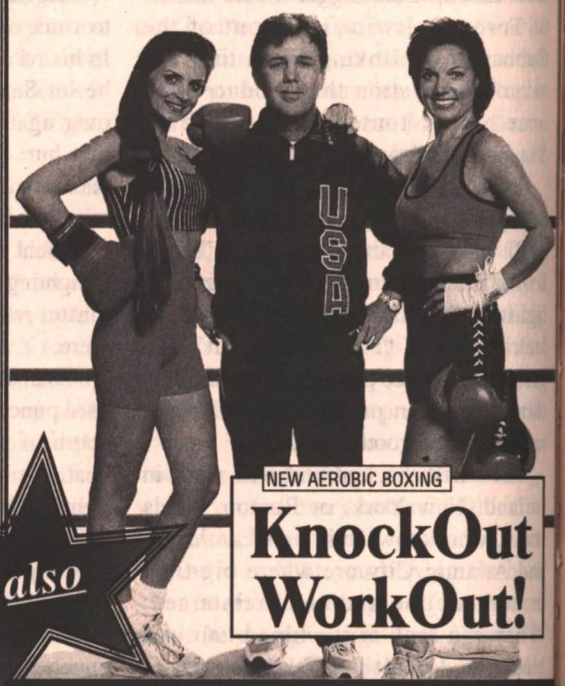

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changed it.

"I knew there was a tremendous void in love stories. I also knew that boxing, although it had been a notoriously bad moneymaker [as a subject for movies], had never been put together properly. It was always, the Mafia had a piece of a fighter, or they were going to shoot his mother if he didn't throw the fight," Stallone told interviewer Paul Perry for *Writer's Digest* in 1977.

"There had never been a *Body And Soul* thing done. I kept the crime out. This man was fighting for dignity. It is a total metaphor. I wanted to do a script about all the people who can do well but never get the opportunity."

Even legendary Hollywood director Frank Capra, whose films like *Mr. Smith Goes To Washington* had cornered the Great Underdog-upsets-the-odds market, was quoted after *Rocky* came out as saying, "Boy, that's a picture I wish I had made."

After *Rocky* scored so big and made him one of Hollywood's most bankable talents, Stallone was quoted as swearing off any sequels. Sad to say, he did four more *Rocky* films, each more preposterous than the one before it. Rocky became the only fighter in the history of boxing who actually got better looking the more he got beat up. Instead of running the mean streets of Philadelphia, he started running up mountains in Siberia, and looked more like a contestant in the middleweight class of the Mr. Olympia contest than a heavyweight boxer.

Regardless, the films have had an undeniable impact on boxing over the last two decades, and not just because it's impossible to go to an amateur smoker anymore without hearing the theme song that even Mickey the wizened trainer got sick of in *Rocky III*.

Ask Pazienza, the former IBF lightweight and WBA junior middleweight champion, who wouldn't have been either of those had he not sat down in a theater in Cranston, Rhode Island, 20 years ago to watch the original *Rocky*.

"It influenced my life more than anything in the world," says "The Pazmanian Devil."

Paz was only 14 when *Rocky* came out. He had started boxing at five, but as he got older, other sports started competing for his time and attention, and his interest in boxing waned. Then he saw Rocky Balboa, a *paisano*, overcome incredible odds in life and the boxing ring, and when he left the theater, Paz was a boxer again and for good, slap-fighting with a friend all the way home.

"If it wasn't for that movie, I don't think I ever would have gotten back into it," he says.

For the past decade-plus, Pazienza has been one of boxing's most exciting and colorful performers. Curiously, with his ring wardrobe of loincloths, leopard skins, Indian gear, and assorted face masks, he seems to have adopted the Ali-clone Apollo Creed (who can forget his entrance into the ring as George Washington?), and not "The Italian Stallion," as his role model. (At a celebrity-packed *Rocky* anniversary party at New York City's All-Star Cafe in March, actor Carl Weathers, who portrayed Creed, introduced himself to Pazienza, who looked at him incredulously and exclaimed, "I can't believe *you* f_____' introduced yourself to *me!* Are you crazy?")

But if *Rocky* influenced Pazienza, the fighter, in turn, influenced others.

"*[Rocky]* had more impact on the world because of what it did for me," he explains, referring to his own storied career that has included returning to the ring after a 1991 automobile accident in which he suffered fractures in the third and fourth vertebrae in his neck.

The sight of Pazienza, told he would never fight again, working out with that halo screwed into his head probably staggered the imagination of even Stallone himself (no small feat). Paz credits his attitude to the "inspiration, drive, and motivation" he gleaned from his friend's movie.

Paz' own saga, *Heart And Soul: The True Life Story Of Vinny Pazienza*, is slated to begin filming at the end of this year, with a $17-million budget, or roughly 16 times what it cost to make *Rocky*. A film based on the life of Wepner, however, would be redundant, since he was the earnest, hopelessly overmatched blue-collar warrior upon whom Stallone patterned Rocky Balboa. That was after "The Bayonne Bleeder"

(Continued on page 62)

"The total effect is a
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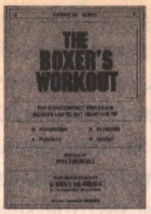

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came within 19 seconds of lasting all 15 rounds against Ali.

Wepner, then 35, had spent his career battling for small change in joints not too different from the Resurrection A.C. With a record of 30-9-2, he was ranked eighth by THE RING when he fought Ali, but was known mostly for the copious amounts of blood he had shed in the ring. By the time he got his title shot, more than 300 stitches had been sewn into Wepner's face. Twenty-three more were added after the fight.

"I didn't have natural talent," admits Wepner, "and I had to compensate by getting in real good shape and being strong."

It was strictly a baloney-vs.-the grinder fight, although the New Jersey battler was credited with a knockdown in the ninth round when the champion went down from a right hand. Pictures would later show that Wepner's left foot pinning down Ali's right foot helped send Ali to the canvas.

Unlike the celluloid battle it engendered, Ali-Wepner was hardly an epic struggle, but the challenger's bravery and stalwartness in almost making it to the final bell impressed even the champion.

"There's not another human being in the world that can go 15 rounds like that," Ali said.

Now 56, Wepner works in sales and public relations, and is happily married to his third wife, Linda. ("Please get that in or I won't get any for six months," pleaded Wepner, a hard thing to imagine Rocky saying about the sainted Adrian.) Wepner recalls being contacted by Stallone a few months after his title bout.

"He told me he was writing a movie about a fighter that gets a shot at a black champion," says Wepner, who ended up on the set of *Rocky* as "like a technical adviser. When I saw the whole movie put together, I was completely astounded. It was really awesome, a great film.

"To this day, 20 years later, people still talk about it. They see it and call me up. It's a great thing just to be the inspiration for a movie, period. I had a couple of great things happen then, fighting Ali for the title, who was the greatest celebrity, and maybe the greatest fighter of all-time, and having a movie made about me.

"It was a great time of my life."

Just as with Pazienza, fame will not let go of The Bayonne Bleeder. Turner Network Television has included Wepner in a special production called *The Impossible Dream*, to air in early-July, about people who have achieved against incredible odds. He'll be showcased alongside such luminaries as basketball great Michael Jordan, astronaut James Lovell, and former governor of New York Mario Cuomo.

Sounding like the movie character he inspired, Wepner says, "To this day, people respect me because they know I gave 110 percent."

That's what *Rocky* was all about. And in spite of the glitzy, schmaltzy, overdone, and ridiculous sequels, the original story about the kind-hearted, decent Philadelphia boob who became a boxer because "I can't sing or dance," and "never had no prime" still makes tough, hardened veteran boxing writers snuffle and cheer.

Okay, just me, then. The rest of you are all too sophisticated, hip, and cynical to fall for such goo, right? I'll remember that the next time I see you cheering at a Butterbean fight.

Who'll remember *that* cartoon character in 20 years? ■

Pete Ehrmann, a frequent contributor to The Ring, is based in West Allis, Wisconsin.

Mark Johnson

(Continued from page 31)

just broken down thinking things like, *How did Danny Romero leapfrog over me and get the title shot?* Instead, you just had to laugh about it. I mean, the way they were ignoring this guy, it was ridiculous."

As a result, until May 4, the Forum routinely referred to Johnson as the "uncrowned" flyweight champion.

The 24-year-old Johnson, who improved to 29-1 (22), began fighting for Forum Boxing more than three years ago. It was a smart, if seemingly risky, move—taking in this scrappy East Coast black fighter to compete in a division dominated by Latins, and to fight him mostly in California venues where the audience is predominantly Latin as well.

Johnson triumphed over one Latino after another. Like "Black Mamba" Roger Mayweather before him, he became, for a while, a fighter Mexicans loved to hate. He fought more guys from south of the border than Davy Crockett and Jim Bowie put together.

But even the fans who rooted against him noticed that Johnson never talked trash, never backed up in the ring, and never failed to put on a good show. In fact, you could almost never find him in a clinch. In Seattle, they say it's either raining or about to rain. When Johnson was in the ring, he was either punching or about to punch. And he didn't fool around with slapping, little-guy punches. He could wallop. He also showed footwork, balance, cunning, and confidence, looking very much like not only the best flyweight in the world, but one of the best fighters in the world, regardless of weight.

They say you should box a puncher and punch a boxer, but whenever the 5'3" Johnson, a true boxer-puncher, was challenged to a slugfest, he waded right in. And when the other guy didn't want to fight, Johnson made him do so.

He gradually won respect, and even applause, from the fans. At the same time, he recognized that the warriors he was facing had not exactly been silver-spoon babies themselves. "I have heart for them," he said.

Johnson's lone defeat came by decision in his second fight, a four-rounder in Belfast, Ireland, that went to homeboy Richie Wenton. After winning 11 straight in Washington, D.C., he went west for his first fight at the Great Western Forum in April 1993, winning an eight-round decision over a tough, quick Rudy Bradley.

Johnson decisioned the world-rated Alberto Jimenez, Armando Diaz, and Roberto Alvarez in 12-rounders before knocking out Eduardo Ramirez. After outpointing the dangerous Ancee Gedeon in April 1994, he kayoed his next 10 opponents. Trained by his father,

Ham Johnson, he had found his style.

As word about Johnson got out, a lot of his opponents figured their best strategy was to forget going the distance and come out to kill or be killed in four or five rounds. It made for some terrific contests. Johnson's February 1995 war with Panama's Leon Salazar was particularly furious. The Forum fans were on their feet much of the fight, which ended when Salazar, saying his hand was broken, failed to come out for the fourth round. *KO*, a sister publication of THE RING, named the third stanza a runner-up for Round of the Year.

Meanwhile, there was no title shot. With a wife and three children to support, Johnson kept training regularly and fighting often.

All the frustration surfaced in a toe-to-toe war last December with the courageous Raul Rios. In the third round, Johnson put Rios down with a furious flurry. With Rios already on his knees, Johnson slammed in one final shot, a rabbit punch that clearly hurt the Mexican.

It was a serious, flagrant foul from a guy who'd always fought furiously, but gentlemanly. Johnson had not only hit his opponent while he was down, but he did it with a blow behind the head. Rios could no longer continue, but he did not pull a Luis Santana or even protest.

The crowd screamed in anger, but Johnson was awarded a TKO win instead of a disqualification loss. He immediately apologized to everyone he could find, including the fans.

His next fight was against the 28-year-old Tejedor, who had lost the title to Romero in April 1995. At the start, Johnson, 111½, and Tejedor, 112, Barranquilla, Colombia, were walking around each other, throwing occasional shots in a typical chess match, when suddenly Tejedor tried a big right, leaving himself open just a split-second. Johnson used the time to get there with a smashing counter straight left. Down went the Colombian, and referee Pat Russell (USA) counted him out.

Tejedor, 43-5 (31), had been kayoed only once before, in March 1990, by Chiquita Gonzalez. The Colombian said he knew it hadn't looked like it, but he had trained quite hard. This was a guy who, after all, had taken respected slugger Romero 12 rounds.

Forum Boxing Vice President John Jackson immediately pronounced Johnson "the best flyweight in the world." Added Beyrooty, "A lot of guys say they'll take on anybody. Too Sharp really does. When he signed with us, he said he would fight anybody we put in front of him, and he didn't need to see the tapes. That's exactly what he did."

Notice Beyrooty referred to Johnson as "Too Sharp." While just about every fighter has a ring monicker, few of them are used in everyday conversation. It's doubtful, for instance, that Nigel Benn's pals ever say something like, "'Dark Destroyer,' let's take in a flick tonight." How many people do you think ask Bernard Hopkins, "'Executioner,' will you please pass the salt?" And does anyone really say to either Marco Antonio Barrera or Johnny Tapia, "'Baby-Faced Assassin,' would you like fries with that?"

Friends actually call the fighter "Too Sharp." It sort of rolls off the tongue. Johnson appeared to have brought everyone from his neighborhood to watch his victory, and they all jammed into his dressing room before the fight. Their shouts of "Too Sharp" could be heard at the other end of a long corridor—and probably halfway to Nebraska.

After the victory, father Ham broke into momentary tears. "I'm drunk and I haven't had a drink yet," he said.

What's next for Too Sharp? Originally, he was supposed to have fought Romero, who, citing weight problems, vacated the title rather than face Johnson in a mandated match. If Romero's handlers keep ducking Too Sharp at 112 pounds and Tapia at 115, they may want to forge a new division for their fighter at 113½. That aside, the two top-rated IBF contenders are Thais, and the top 10 is virtually void of name fighters. It's possible that Johnson will keep the belt for as long as he wants to.

Meanwhile, he promised his family nothing special to celebrate his cherished title. "I just want to take a nice little vacation," Johnson said, "and then watch Chavez-De La Hoya, just like everybody else." ■

Ivan G. Goldman is The Ring's West Coast correspondent.

Scrapiron Johnson

(Continued from page 45)

But Liston and a lot of the other name heavyweights to whom Scrapiron stood up were impressed enough by his durability to regularly seek his services when they needed to prepare for big fights.

Johnson served as a sparring partner for Liston, Foreman, and Joe Frazier. The first two were bullies who liked gym wars, but Orbillo recalls that in training, "Scrappy was the only one who made [them] back down."

"I made good money—$400 to $500 a week—because I was that kinda sparring partner," says Scrap. "I never ran from anybody in boxing."

People who don't know much about boxing think a promoter's dream is an undefeated young heavyweight with a punch like a stun-gun. But in fact most

promoters dream of fighters like Scrapiron Johnson, who needed to know only where and what time they wanted him to show up for a fight. There was no need for such trivial stuff as the name, record, Social Security number, and Zodiac sign of the guy in the other corner, as seems to be the case with today's fighters.

"He'd be working out at the gym at 6:30 in the evening, and a call would come saying they wanted him to fight in Bakersfield a couple hours later," remembers Orbillo. "He'd go."

The reason was simple. Explains Scrap, "I loved to fight."

As a boxer he may have been just a trialhorse, but as an economist he was in a class by himself. Johnson proved that in May 1967, in his fight with an undefeated future champion whose sweeping left hook had put 15 of his 16 opponents to sleep.

Joe Frazier, then 23, was a constantly pressing, savage fighter who was already the second-ranked heavyweight contender when he and Scrapiron tangled before 9,155 spectators at the Olympic Auditorium.

Johnson had gone 2-2-1 the previous year, and Quarry had stopped him in the second round of their first fight. Frazier, who would become champion within a year and make his mark as one of the best heavyweights of his era, was a prohibitive favorite to win the fight.

But the odds that interested Scrapiron regarded his chances to be on his feet at the final bell. They were 10-1 that he wouldn't make it.

Seeing a golden opportunity, he latched on to it. The problem would be keeping his head attached to his neck after "Smokin' Joe" hit him with that deadly hook.

Scrap's solution was to find himself a chunk of cement, about 40 pounds worth. "You know when you sink a pole in the ground and then pour that concrete around it and it dries? It was like that," he recalls.

Then he fashioned a large sling, put in the big wad of cement, and wore it around his forehead as he ran up and down the hills in Griffith Park every morning.

The referee gave Scrapiron only three of the 10 rounds, one judge gave him two, and the other said Johnson hadn't won a single round against Frazier. But even before the decision was announced, recalls Orbillo, "there was Scrappy jumping up and down like he'd won the world title. We all looked at each other and wondered, *What's with him?*"

The answer came four days later, when Johnson rolled up to the Hoover Street Gym in what Orbillo remembers as "the largest Cadillac we'd ever seen, with a big cigar in his mouth and a new derby hat on his head."

Scrapiron had been guaranteed a purse of $8,000 for the Frazier fight.

"I took two grand," he told his stunned audience at the gym, "and laid it on me to go the distance."

Which proves for all time that you can lead a trialhorse to slaughter, but you cannot make him sink. ∎

Pete Ehrmann, a frequent contributor to The Ring, is based in West Allis, Wisconsin.

FISKE ON FIGHTS

By Jack Fiske

Have you taken notice of the miasma floating ominously above the boxing scene? It has insidiously infected the sport and threatens to change the way boxing has been viewed and enjoyed. Outstanding and deserving fighters are being ignored by the media (and, as a result, the fans), while overnight oddities, short-run celebrities, and hysterically hyped hoboes are being spotlighted at the slightest opportunity for photo ops and television sound bites.

Does anybody in his right mind believe Butterbean to be a fighter worthy of the fans' attention, while such talents as Marco Antonio Barrera, Wayne McCullough, Tom Johnson, and Mbulelo Botile labor in virtual anonymity? Isn't Jay Leno insulting the public when he has the inept heavyweight, whose sole claim to fame is a physiologically flawed body, on his TV show? And isn't it adding salt to the wounds of the deserving when Leno serves as a cornerman during one of Butterbean's brief ring appearances?

Once, amusing, twice, irritating. Three times? Deplorable. ESPN and Bob Arum should rein in the press agents and stick with bona fide performers. The USA Network's gimmick of a Butterbean lookalike contest serves little purpose other than to further deny attention to fighters who can fight.

Christy Martin is a comely female athlete who, with the dual sponsorship of Don King and Showtime, has recently come upon the boxing scene. Martin has been entertaining during her two-minute-round contests, but so what. She isn't going anywhere, except to the bank. While everybody concerned agrees that Christy is no threat to male fighters, she is pursued by the press, interviewed regularly on television, and has served as a between-rounds analyst on USA. Meanwhile, such as Arturo Gatti, Ike Quartey, and Kennedy McKinney are relegated to near-invisible status.

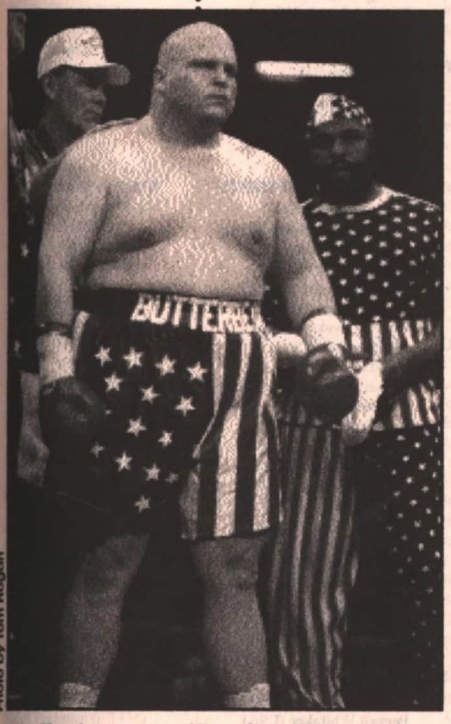


Photo by Tom Hogan

The phenomenon of Butterbean has attracted the likes of Mr. T

Sports Illustrated, the world's largest-circulation sports weekly—and not exactly a friend of boxing—had the temerity to picture Martin as its cover girl. With the cover came an in-depth feature story. More deserving fighters will never see their names or photos in the magazine.

Apparently, it's not enough to be talented inside the ropes. There has to be a gimmick, according to the promoters, the networks, and the rest of the media. I'm talking freaks, costumes, and inept performers who rely on shtick to attract audiences. The introduction of outlandish haircuts in the ring, head-dresses, masks, and silly prefight rituals, which, by the way, are tolerated by all athletic commissions, has created a backlash that will work against the best interests of everyone in the sport—with the exception of the quick-buck-seekers who will take the money and run.

Boxing traditionalists cringe at the appearance and antics of such as Jorge Paez, who was once an actual circus clown, Hector Camacho, Vinny Pazienza, and Bernard Hopkins, among others. The burlesque has spread to the ring announcers, with each attempting to outdo the others with ridiculous phrasing and sophomoric extensions of the fighters' names. There is even one cornerman who shamelessly has his hair cut and stenciled with the name/slogan of his fighter. And you can be certain the TV cameras seek him out every time.

No matter your thoughts on Mike Tyson, at least he's a traditionalist. No fancy frills for "Iron Mike"; plain trunks, no socks, and an ordinary towel serving as his robe. No dancing in the ring. No high-fives. Strictly business. Just plain old fighting skills—as it should be.

"It makes me sick when I see a fighter wearing a hood [like Hopkins' executioner's hood] entering the ring," says Los Angeles fight historian and film collector Nick Beck. "I'm truly offended. It's just like the World Wrestling Federation gimmicks."

There have been previous attempts to promote freaks in the ring. Among the earliest was Ed Dunkhorst, who was billed as "The Human Freight Car." (He stood 6'3" and scaled 290 pounds.) In the '50s, 7'2", 326-pound Ewart Potgieter came to America from South Africa. Neither Dunkhorst nor Potgieter could fight a lick. The fans scoffed, and as a result, the clowns disappeared forever. Let's pray that situation repeats itself in the very near-future. ■

WORLDWIDE RATINGS

The ratings of the three major governing bodies recognized by THE RING are supplied by the organizations themselves. They are updated on these pages as soon as they are made available to us. In this issue, the WBC, WBA, and IBF ratings were compiled as of April 1996.

HEAVYWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Mike Tyson (USA)	C	–	–
Bruce Seldon (USA)	–	C	–
Vacant	–	–	C
Lennox Lewis (GB)	1	4	6
Henry Akinwande (GB)	2	1	4
Frank Bruno (GB)	3	–	–
Oliver McCall (USA)	4	3	2
Alexandr Zolkin (RUS)	5	6	–
Jeremy Williams (USA)	6	12	–
Larry Donald (USA)	7	–	–
Evander Holyfield (USA)	8	–	–
Andrew Golota (POL)	9	8	8
Zeljko Mavrovic (CROA)	10	11	–
Orlin Norris (USA)	13	2	7
Vaughn Bean (USA)	18	5	5
Michael Moorer (USA)	–	7	–
Crawford Grimsley (USA)	22	9	–
James Thunder (NZ)	21	10	–
Francois Botha (SA)	–	–	1
Corrie Sanders (SA)	11	–	3
Buster Mathis Jr. (USA)	20	–	9
Obed Sullivan (USA)	24	–	10

CRUISERWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Anaclet Wamba (FRA)	C	–	–
Nate Miller (USA)	–	C	–
Alfred Cole (USA)	–	–	C
Alexander Gurov (UKR)	1	2	3
Torsten May (GER)	2	4	2
Robert Daniels (USA)	3	3	5
Akim Tafer (FRA)	4	–	–
Alexei Ilin (RUS)	5	6	–
Terry Dunstan (GB)	6	–	8
David Izeqwire (NIG)	7	–	7
William Guthrie (USA)	8	–	–
Patrice Aouissi (FRA)	9	5	–
Arthur Williams (USA)	10	–	–
Adolpho Washington (USA)	13	1	1
Ezequiel Paixao (BRA)	23	7	–
John McClain (USA)	11	8	–
Tony LaRosa (USA)	–	9	–
Brian Laspada (USA)	–	10	12
Jacob Mofokeng (SA)	14	–	4
Uriah Grant (USA)	30	–	6
Chris Okoh (GB)	16	–	9
Terry McGroom (USA)	19	–	10

LT. HEAVYWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Fabrice Tiozzo (FRA)	C	–	–
Virgil Hill (USA)	–	C	–
Henry Maske (GER)	–	–	C
Eddy Smulders (HOLL)	1	1	–
Montell Griffin (USA)	2	3	2
Mike McCallum (USA)	3	5	4
Crawford Ashley (GB)	4	–	–
Nicky Piper (GB)	5	–	–
Maurice Core (GB)	6	–	–
Merqui Sosa (DR)	7	–	–
Yawe Davis (ITA)	8	–	–
Lincoln Carter (USA)	9	–	–
Eric Lucas (CAN)	10	–	–
William Guthrie (USA)	–	2	1
Michael Nunn (USA)	–	4	–
Lou Del Valle (USA)	–	6	7
Duran Williams (USA)	–	7	5
Anthony Begini (NZ)	–	8	–
Drake Thadzi (CAN)	–	9	–
Gary Ballard (SA)	–	10	11
Darrin Allen (USA)	–	–	3
Jeff Harding (AUSTRL)	–	–	6
Richard Hall (USA)	25	–	8
Graciano Rocchigiani (GER)	–	–	9
Stefan Anghern (SWI)	–	11	10

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Thulane Malinga (SA)	C	–	–
Frank Liles (USA)	–	C	–
Roy Jones (USA)	–	–	C
Henry Wharton (GB)	1	–	–
Luciano Torres (BRA)	2	2	11
Bryant Brannon (USA)	3	6	1
Tim Littles (USA)	4	1	–
Frederic Seiller (FRA)	5	8	–
Michael Nunn (USA)	6	–	–
Vincenzo Nardiello (ITA)	7	–	–
Andrei Shkalikov (RUS)	8	–	9
Joe Calzaghe (GB)	9	–	–
Willie Quinn (GB)	10	–	–
Henry Wharton (GB)	–	3	7
Nigel Benn (GB)	–	4	–
Steve Little (USA)	–	5	5
Zafarou Ballogou (TOGO)	–	7	–
Mike Makata (NZ)	–	9	–
Mauricio Amaral (BRA)	27	10	–
Reginaldo Andrade (BRA)	–	–	2
Jean-Claude M'biye (FRA)	–	–	3
Charles Brewer (USA)	14	–	4
Segundo Mercado (ECU)	–	–	6
Mark Delaney (GB)	13	–	8
Frank Rhodes (USA)	–	–	10

MIDDLEWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Keith Holmes (USA)	C	–	–
Shinji Takehara (JAP)	–	C	–
Bernard Hopkins (USA)	–	–	C
Richie Woodhall (GB)	1	9	9
Quincy Taylor (USA)	2	–	–
Otis Grant (CAN)	3	6	–
Jorge Castro (ARG)	4	4	–
John David Jackson (USA)	5	2	2
Julian Jackson (USA)	6	–	–
Silvio Branco (ITA)	7	–	11
Robert Allen (USA)	8	–	3
Robert McCracken (GB)	9	–	4
Roberto Duran (PAN)	10	–	–
William Joppy (USA)	15	1	1
Peter Venancio (BRA)	–	3	–
Chongmo Kim (KOR)	–	5	–
Reggie Johnson (USA)	12	7	–
Teymuraz Kikelidze (RUS)	28	8	–
Aaron Davis (USA)	13	10	–
Lloyd Bryan (USA)	–	–	5
Alex Rios (USA)	–	–	6
Chris Pyatt (GB)	–	–	7
Joe Lipsey (USA)	–	–	8
Juan Viloria (COL)	–	–	10

JR. MIDDLEWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Terry Norris (USA)	C	–	C
Julio Cesar Vasquez (ARG)	–	C	–
Laurent Boudouani (FRA)	1	5	6
Winky Wright (USA)	2	1	3
Troy Waters (AUSTRL)	3	–	–
Ernie Artango (AUSTRL)	4	–	–
Godfrey Nyakana (UGA)	5	11	–
Raul Marquez (USA)	6	8	1
David Ciarlante (ITA)	7	–	–
Adrian Dodson (GB)	8	–	–
Luis Santana (DR)	9	–	–
Paul Vaden (USA)	10	–	–
Carl Daniels (USA)	–	2	2
Robert McCracken (GB)	–	3	–
Alejandro Ugueto (VEN)	–	4	–
Johnson Tshuma (SA)	–	6	–
Giovanni Pretorious (SA)	16	7	4
Julio Cesar Green (USA)	–	9	–
Javier Castillejo (SPA)	11	10	–
Anthony Stephens (USA)	–	–	5
Paul Vaden (USA)	–	–	7
Darrin Morris (USA)	–	–	8
Rossman Henry (COL)	–	–	9
Vincent Pettway (USA)	–	–	10

WELTERWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Pernell Whitaker (USA)	C	–	–
Ike Quartey (GHA)	–	C	–
Felix Trinidad (PR)	–	–	C
Wilfredo Rivera (PR)	1	3	1
Derrell Coley (USA)	2	4	6
Gary Jacobs (GB)	3	9	3
Patrick Charpentier (FRA)	4	5	4
Pedro Sanchez (DR)	5	12	12
Jake Rodriguez (PR)	6	–	–
Ralph Jones (USA)	7	–	–
James Page (USA)	8	–	–
Andrei Pestryaev (RUS)	9	2	–
Lonnie Smith (USA)	10	–	–
Oba Carr (USA)	–	1	2
Sean Sullivan (NZ)	–	6	–
Guillermo Jones (PAN)	22	7	–
Andrew Murray (GUY)	14	8	7
Jufrison Pontoh (RUS)	–	10	–
Yori Boy Campas (MEX)	–	–	5

Maxim Nesterenko (RUS)	27	–	8
Jorge Alvez (ARG)	–	–	9
Ray Lovato (USA)	–	–	10

JR. WELTERWEIGHTS	**WBC**	**WBA**	**IBF**
Julio Cesar Chavez (MEX)	**C**	**–**	**–**
Juan Coggi (ARG)	**–**	**C**	**–**
Kostya Tszyu (AUSTRL)	**–**	**–**	**C**
Miguel Angel Gonzalez (MEX)	1	–	–
Khalid Rahilou (FRA)	2	1	–
Ismael Chaves (ARG)	3	–	–
David Kamau (USA)	4	4	3
Charles Murray (USA)	5	7	7
Freddie Ladd (USA)	6	–	–
Soren Sondergaard (DEN)	7	–	–
Sharmba Mitchell (USA)	8	–	–
Jose Barbosa (VEN)	9	5	–
Dingaan Thobela (SA)	10	–	–
Frankie Randall (USA)	–	2	–
Freddie Pendleton (USA)	–	3	2
Jan Bergman (SA)	–	6	1
Jong Hoon Yuh (KOR)	–	8	–
Hiromu Kuwata (JAP)	15	9	–
Ross Hale (GB)	22	10	6
Pedro Padilla (COL)	–	–	4
Michele Piccirillo (ITA)	12	–	5
Jermal Corbin (USA)	–	–	8
Sharmba Mitchell (USA)	–	–	9
Ralph Jones (USA)	–	–	10

LIGHTWEIGHTS	**WBC**	**WBA**	**IBF**
Vacant	**C**	**–**	**–**
Orzubek Nazarov (JAP)	**–**	**C**	**–**
Phillip Holiday (SA)	**–**	**–**	**C**
Jean Baptist Mendy (FRA)	1	–	4
Steve Johnston (USA)	2	5	7
Lamar Murphy (USA)	3	–	–
Shane Mosley (USA)	4	11	–
Cesar Bazan (MEX)	5	–	–
Ricardo Silva (ARG)	6	–	–
Angel Mona (FRA)	7	6	12
Ivan Robinson (USA)	8	7	1
Jeff Fenech (AUSTRL)	9	–	–
Hiroyuki Sakamoto (JAP)	10	3	–
Leavander Johnson (USA)	–	1	10
Fred Ladd (USA)	–	2	2
Raul H. Balbi (ARG)	–	4	–
Adrianus Taroreh (INDO)	–	8	–
David Dodi Tetteh (GHA)	16	9	–
Carlos Fernandez (PORT)	–	10	–
Miguel Julio (COL)	–	–	3
Demetrius Ceballos (USA)	–	–	5
John Lark (USA)	–	–	6
Joel Perez (USA)	–	–	8
Hector Tejeda (ARG)	–	–	9

JR. LIGHTWEIGHTS	**WBC**	**WBA**	**IBF**
Azumah Nelson (GHA)	**C**	**–**	**–**
Yong Soo Choi (KOR)	**–**	**C**	**–**
Arturo Gatti (USA)	**–**	**–**	**C**
Anatoly Alexandrov (RUS)	1	2	6
Gabriel Ruelas (USA)	2	–	–
Ulrich Johnson (TRIN)	3	7	–
Genaro Hernandez (USA)	4	–	–
Julien Lorcy (FRA)	5	3	8
Pedro Gutierrez (ARG)	6	–	–
Robert Garcia (USA)	7	6	2
Boris Sinitsin (RUS)	8	–	3
Justin Juuko (UGA)	9	–	–
Djamel Lifa (FRA)	10	5	9
Orlando Soto (PAN)	–	1	–
Carlos Gerena (PR)	–	4	–
Lakva Sim (MON)	–	8	–
Masuaki Takeda (JAP)	–	9	–
Takanori Hatakeyama (JAP)	29	10	–
Tracy Patterson (USA)	–	–	1
Jeff Fenech (AUSTRL)	–	–	4
Wilson Rodriguez (DR)	–	–	5
Cliff Samardin (AUSTRL)	21	–	7
Jaime Rangel (COL)	–	–	10

FEATHERWEIGHTS	**WBC**	**WBA**	**IBF**
Luisito Espinoza (PHIL)	**C**	**–**	**–**
Eloy Rojas (VEN)	**–**	**C**	**–**
Tom Johnson (USA)	**–**	**–**	**C**
Cesar Soto (MEX)	1	–	–
Carlos Rios (ARG)	2	–	–
Manuel Medina (MEX)	3	–	–
Alejandro Gonzalez (MEX)	4	–	–
Tsuyoshi Harada (JAP)	5	–	–
Yuji Watanabe (JAP)	6	2	–
Billy Hardy (GB)	7	6	5
Hector Lizarraga (USA)	8	–	1
Derrick Gainer (USA)	9	4	–
Yong Woon Park (KOR)	10	–	–
Wilfredo Vasquez (PR)	–	1	8
Miguel Arrozal (PHIL)	–	3	–
Ilham Lahia (INDO)	–	5	–
David Santos (USA)	11	7	4
Jun Gorres (PHIL)	–	8	–
Ever Beleno (COL)	–	9	7
Cesar Soto (PAN)	–	10	–
Welcome Ncita (SA)	–	–	2
Orlando Soto (PAN)	–	–	3
Jose Badillo (PR)	–	–	6
November Ntshingila (AUSTRL)	–	–	9
Victor Polo (COL)	–	–	10

JR. FEATHERWEIGHTS	**WBC**	**WBA**	**IBF**
Daniel Zaragoza (MEX)	**C**	**–**	**–**
Antonio Cermeno (VEN)	**–**	**C**	**–**
Vuyani Bungu (SA)	**–**	**–**	**C**
Erik Morales (MEX)	1	4	–
Hector Acero-Sanchez (DR)	2	–	–
Joichiro Tatsuyoshi (JAP)	3	–	–
Yuichi Kasai (JAP)	4	1	6
Bong Chul Kim (KOR)	5	–	–
Enrique Sanchez (MEX)	6	12	–
Enrique Jupiter (MEX)	7	–	–
Harold Mestre (COL)	8	–	–
Guty Espadas (MEX)	9	8	–
Welcome Ncita (SA)	10	–	–
Yober Ortega (VEN)	–	2	–
Rafael del Valle (PR)	–	3	–
Vincenzo Belcastro (ITA)	15	5	2
Jesus Salud (USA)	–	6	9
Tsuyoshi Harada (JAP)	–	7	–
Pastor Maurin (ARG)	–	9	–
Mike Garcia (USA)	–	10	–
Pablo Ozuna (COL)	–	–	1
Nurhuda (INDO)	–	–	3
Daniel Alicer (PR)	–	–	4
Salim Medjkoune (FRA)	13	–	5
Victor Llerena (COL)	–	–	7
Aristead Clayton (USA)	27	–	8
Angel Chacon (PR)	21	–	10

BANTAMWEIGHTS	**WBC**	**WBA**	**IBF**
Wayne McCullough (IRE)	**C**	**–**	**–**
Nana Konadu (GHA)	**–**	**C**	**–**
Mbulelo Botile (SA)	**–**	**–**	**C**
Khaoyai Mahasarakam (THAI)	1	–	–
Jose Luis Bueno (MEX)	2	–	–
Sirimongkol Singmanassuk (THAI)	3	–	–
Victor Rabanales (MEX)	4	–	–
Pastor Maurin (ARG)	5	–	–
In Jin Chi (KOR)	6	–	–
Paul Ayala (USA)	7	7	4
Dario Azuaga (PAR)	8	–	–
Luigi Camputaro (ITA)	9	–	–
Choresu Cyoe (KOR)	10	–	–
Daorung Chuvatana (THAI)	–	1	–
Yong Hoon Lee (KOR)	–	2	–
Lukhin CP Gym (THAI)	–	3	–
John Armour (GB)	–	4	3
Angel Chacon (PR)	–	5	–
Abraham Torres (VEN)	14	6	–
Chang Kyun Oh (KOR)	23	8	–
Tim Austin (USA)	–	9	1
Joichiro Tatsuyoshi (JAP)	–	10	–
Juvenal Berrio (COL)	–	–	2
Ancee Gedeon (USA)	–	–	5
Torsak Pongsopha (THAI)	–	–	6
Harold Mestre (COL)	–	–	7
Sergio Reyes (USA)	–	–	8
Harold Grey (COL)	–	–	9
Adrian Kaspari (INDO)	24	–	10

JR. BANTAMWEIGHTS	**WBC**	**WBA**	**IBF**
Hiroshi Kawashima (JAP)	**C**	**–**	**–**
Alimi Goitia (VEN)	**–**	**C**	**–**
Carlos Salazar (ARG)	**–**	**–**	**C**
Cecilio Espino (USA)	1	–	–
Gerry Penalosa (PHIL)	2	6	–
Joel Luna Zarate (MEX)	3	–	–
Luis Bolano (COL)	4	–	–
Hipolito Saucedo (USA)	5	–	–
Gabriel Mira (MEX)	6	–	–
Adonis Cruz (NIC)	7	7	–
Jesus Rojas (VEN)	8	1	–
In Joo Cho (KOR)	9	–	–
Qku Yong Zo (KOR)	10	–	–
Yokthai Sithoar (THAI)	30	2	–
Veeraphol Sahaprom (THAI)	–	3	–
Danny Romero (USA)	–	4	2
Luis Bolanos Paez (COL)	–	5	–
Jai Chin Lim (KOR)	15	8	–
Satoshi Iida (JAP)	–	9	–
Jose Alonso Moreno (MEX)	–	10	–
Jaji Sibali (SA)	18	–	1
Ubadel Soto (COL)	–	–	3
Andy Agosto (PR)	24	–	4
Jose Diaz (USA)	–	–	5
Ricky Matulessi (INDO)	23	–	6
Ratanachai Sor Voraphin (THAI)	17	–	7
Polito Saucedo (USA)	–	–	8
Orlando Tobon (COL)	–	–	9
Cesar Singo (EQU)	–	–	10

FLYWEIGHTS	**WBC**	**WBA**	**IBF**
Yuri Arbachakov (RUS)	**C**	**–**	**–**
Saen Sow Ploenchit (THAI)	**–**	**C**	**–**
Vacant	**–**	**–**	**C**
Isaias Zamudio (USA)	1	5	11
Chatchai Sasakul (THAI)	2	–	3
Daniel Ward (SA)	3	2	–
Alejandro Montiel (MEX)	4	–	12
Enrique Orozco (MEX)	5	4	–
Ladislao Vazquez (MEX)	6	–	–
Yong Soon Chang (KOR)	7	7	–
Salvatore Fanni (ITA)	8	–	–
Chokchai Chokviwat (THAI)	9	–	–
Raul Juarez (MEX)	10	–	–
Evangelino Perez (PAN)	12	1	5
Leo Gamez (VEN)	–	3	–
Hiroki Ioka (JAP)	–	6	–
Alexander Mahmutov (RUS)	14	8	–
Takashi Ohba (JAP)	18	9	–
Jesper Jensen (DEN)	–	10	–
Mark Johnson (USA)	–	–	1
Francisco Tejedor (COL)	20	11	2
Yokthai Sithoar (THAI)	–	–	4
Robbie Regan (GB)	–	–	6
Luigi Camputaro (ITA)	–	–	7
Abdi Pohan (INDO)	–	–	8
Ferid Ben Jeddou (TUN)	–	–	9
Yodchingchai Sornthong (THAI)	–	–	10

JR. FLYWEIGHTS	**WBC**	**WBA**	**IBF**
Saman Sorjaturong (THAI)	**C**	**–**	**–**
Carlos Murillo (PAN)	**–**	**C**	**–**
Michael Carbajal (USA)	**–**	**–**	**C**
Chiquita Gonzalez (MEX)	1	–	4
Manuel Jesus Herrera (DR)	2	4	6
Phanieng Sasiprabha-Poontarat (THAI)	3	10	–
Keiji Yamaguchi (JAP)	4	12	–
Shiro Yahiro (JAP)	5	8	12
Yamil Caraballo (COL)	6	–	–
Joma Gamboa (PHIL)	7	–	–
Jesus Chong (MEX)	8	7	–
Ric Magramo (PHIL)	9	–	–
Ali Galvez (CHILE)	10	–	–
Pichitnoi Sithbangprachan (THAI)	–	1	–
Hi Yong Choi (KOR)	–	2	–
Jin Ho Kim (KOR)	–	3	–
Sinn Ploenchit (THAI)	–	5	–
Hadao C.P. Gym (THAI)	–	6	–
Yong Jin Kim (KOR)	29	9	–
Mauricio Pastrana (COL)	–	–	1
Eric Griffin (USA)	11	–	2
P.S. Wonjongkam (THAI)	–	–	3
Anis Roga (INDO)	–	–	5
Melchor Cob Castro (MEX)	–	–	7
Onewin Chareon (THAI)	–	–	8
James Wanene (KEN)	–	–	9
Luis Doria (COL)	14	–	10

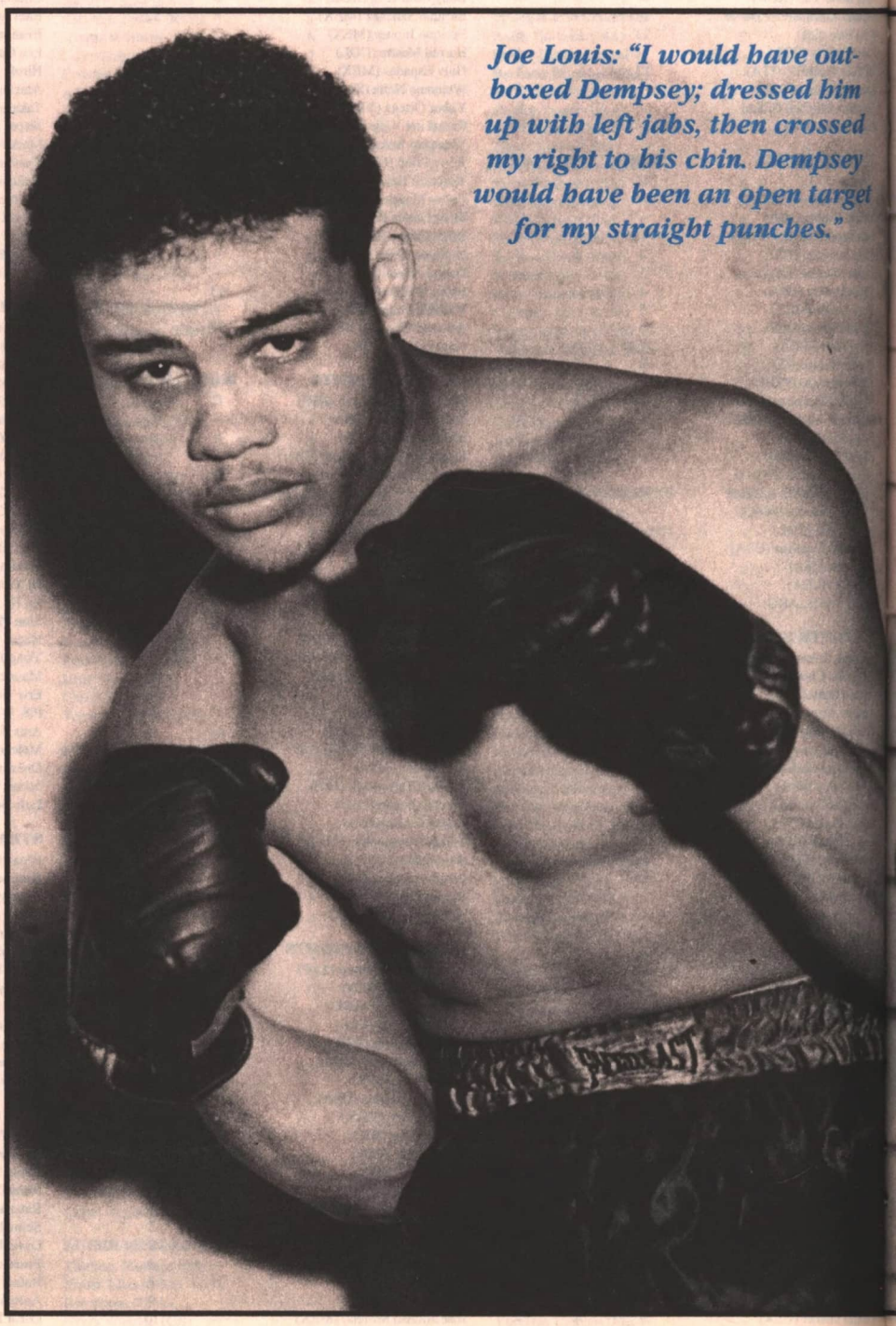
STRAWWEIGHTS	**WBC**	**WBA**	**IBF**
Ricardo Lopez (MEX)	**C**	**–**	**–**
Rosendo Alvarez (NIC)	**–**	**C**	**–**
Vacant	**–**	**–**	**C**
Rocky Lin (JAP)	1	3	4
Songkram Porpaoin (THAI)	2	2	–
Ala Villamor (PHIL)	3	10	7
Andy Tabanas (PHIL)	4	4	–
Pichitnoi Chor Siriwat (THAI)	5	–	–
Kenta Sato (PHIL)	6	–	–
Sinn Sow Ploenchit (THAI)	7	–	–
Hyung Sok Kang (KOR)	8	–	–
Morgan Ndumo (SA)	9	–	–
Surachai Saebcmorakot (THAI)	10	–	–
Chana Porpaoin (THAI)	11	1	–
Yamil Caraballo (COL)	–	5	–
Noel Tunacao (INDO)	–	6	–
Kermin Guardia (COL)	–	7	5
Kenta Sato (PHIL)	–	8	–
Rhindile Ngingi (SA)	–	9	–
Ratanapol Voraphin (THAI)	–	–	1
Shinichi Tamaki (JAP)	–	–	2
Osvaldo Guerrero (MEX)	–	12	3
Ernesto Rubillar (PHIL)	27	–	6
Rafael Torres (USA)	–	–	8
Antonio Perez (MEX)	–	–	9
Oscar Flores (COL)	–	–	10

CLASSIC

From THE RING, September 1937

SOCK OF AGES

A pseudo-prize fight between Joe Louis and Jack Dempsey—with interviews on the subject with these ring killers



Joe Louis: "I would have outboxed Dempsey; dressed him up with left jabs, then crossed my right to his chin. Dempsey would have been an open target for my straight punches."

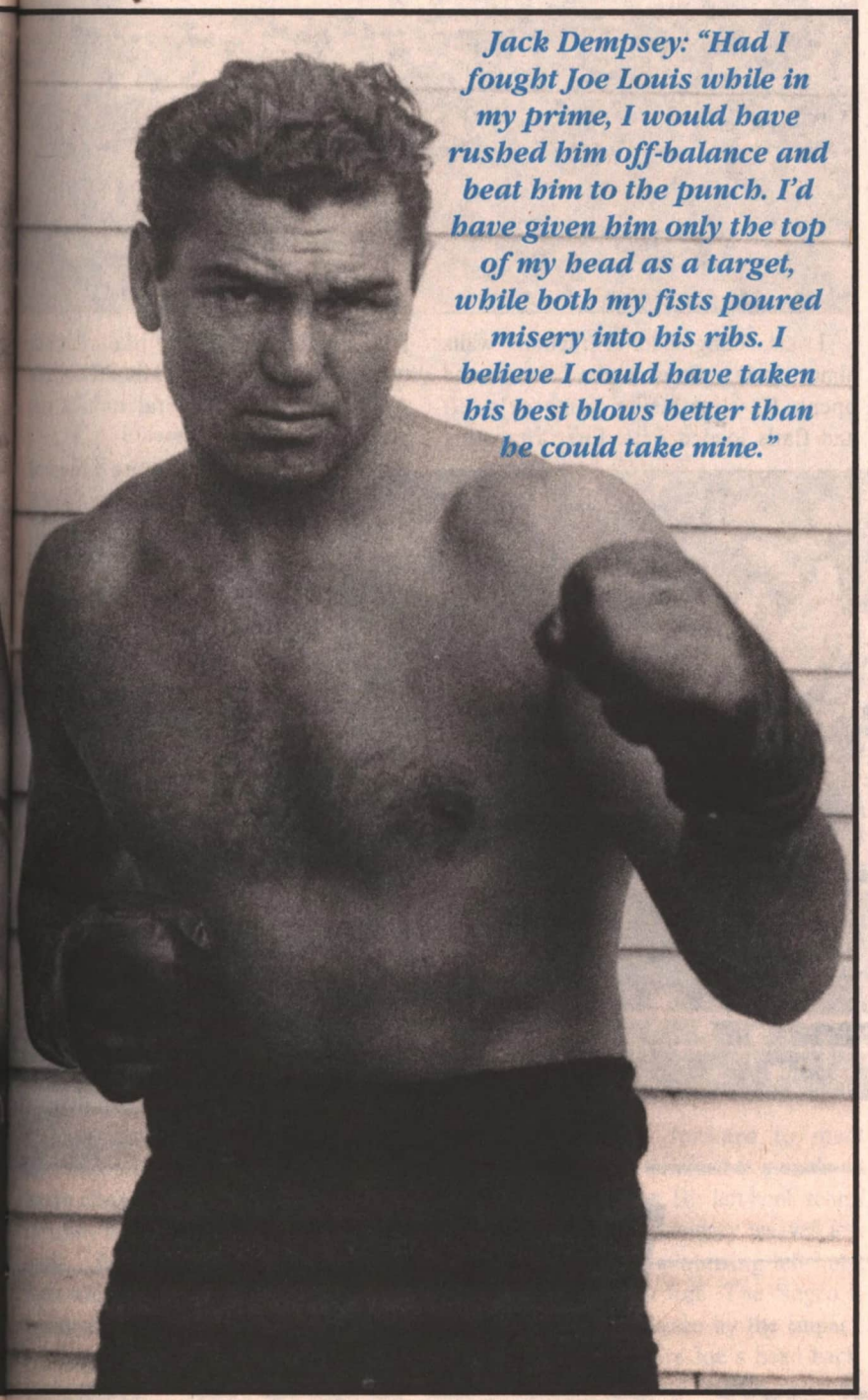
By **Gene Kessler**

The scene is Soldier Field.

Incandescent rays flood the white-canvassed stage, and out into the night more than 100,000 faces stare down, row upon row in ghostlike formation ... ashen faces ... brown faces ... black and yellow faces. Their voices mumble in a strange cacophony, familiar only to the fistic followers. Their pulse runs a fever in anticipation of a fight ... a great battle of gloves with a knockout inevitable. Spines cringe ... flesh squirms ... the gladiators are in the ring.

In one corner towers a portentous amber giant with steel muscles, as cold and still as a tombstone. His brown lips are pursed like a new doughnut ... jet kinky hair glistening ... smooth face, set off by high cheeks and long pointed chin, resembling a bronze statue in the screaming light.

Six feet of trigger-nervous sunburn twitches in the opposite corner. The white adversary surges vitality. He scrapes resin dust underfoot, paws at the ropes, and rubs his square nose with a leather-padded thumb. His beard is long and coarse. Heavy, dark locks tousle upon a high, frown-studded forehead ... spindly legs remind one of toothpicks.



Jack Dempsey: "Had I fought Joe Louis while in my prime, I would have rushed him off-balance and beat him to the punch. I'd have given him only the top of my head as a target, while both my fists poured misery into his ribs. I believe I could have taken his best blows better than he could take mine."

The gong clangs. Feet shuffle. Jack Dempsey, "The Manassa Mauler," races from his corner, crouched to spring with flying gloves. Joe Louis, "The Brown Bomber," glides over the canvas flatfooted, poised with fists high, elbows in. Killer moves to meet killer.

A long sepia arm snakes out. The thud of leather tells that the first blow is struck. Dempsey's head snaps back. He weaves low, then circles back, wheels, and lunges forward with a fury. His left hook catches only a brown arm as Louis backs up, protecting himself with arms and gloves. Another left hook knifes the amber ribs. Joe wobbles ... steps in quickly and exchanges body pistons with his assailant. Jack misses a looping right for the head, and Louis' right dunks the white stomach.

The Manassa Mauler leaps forward, slips a left jab, and rivets gloves upon the sepia body. His scraggly hair bobs like a new cork on a muddy stream. He drives Louis back, back to the ropes, where the brown man wheels and nimbly glides out of range, then sprays Dempsey's face with punitive jabs. Dempsey vainly tries to weave under the long brown arms as the bell interrupts.

Dempsey quickens his stride in bounding out for the second glove spasm. He stops suddenly, swerves from a jab, feints a left hook, and crosses a right over the heart. Louis sets down abruptly. His long face ripples a faint smile. He pulls himself up, sidesteps Jack's rush, and pops a jab into the charging antagonist.

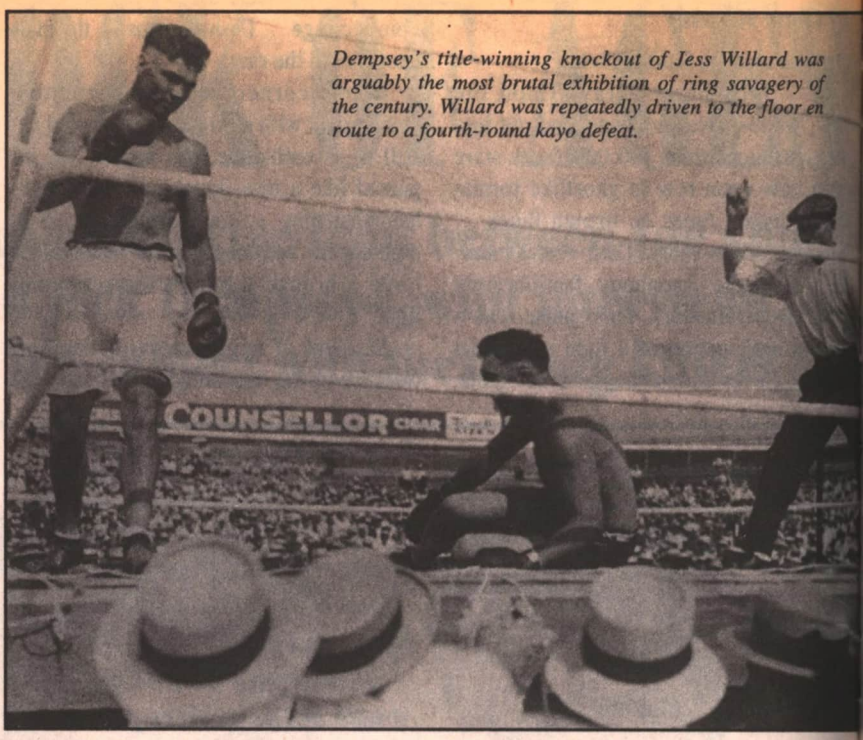
Now Joe shuffles into range with precision. He slips a right ... hooks a short left to the chin. Dempsey reels. A right whistles to the whiskers. Pandemonium pops like the exhaust whistle of an overheated boiler. The throng whoops with primitive screams. Dempsey is down.

Jack leaps up like a wounded tiger and runs into a jab. He rears erect and rolls with a straight right to muffle the dynamite. Suddenly, Dempsey flicks his own left hand with effective jabs ... one, two, three. Louis registers surprise by not

changing expressions. Joe's right grazes Jack's chin. Dempsey feints a left, then thrusts a galvanic right to the button. The brown legs turn rubbery. Louis rolls into the ropes, gloves protecting his chin. The bell stops Dempsey.

Trainer Jack Blackburn works frantically over the Bomber. Louis' eyes regain their luster. He shuffles out to meet Dempsey's charge, determined to set his own pace this round. He pops a jab to the nose, blocks a left hook, and slips a right. The brown man ducks under another right, tips Dempsey with his open left glove, and drives Jack's chin against his Adam's apple with a right blast. The white man spins and falls inert upon his face.

Chairs are overturned. Hats sail high. The throng exhilarates as Dempsey slowly draws his knees under him. His eyes roll wryly, then focus his antagonist vengefully. At the count of eight Jack leaps up, rushing Louis ... runs into a jab. Joe reaches to spin his frenzied foe, but Jack bobs under the brown arms and digs a left hook to the body. They exchange blows in close as the bell clangs.



Dempsey's title-winning knockout of Jess Willard was arguably the most brutal exhibition of ring savagery of the century. Willard was repeatedly driven to the floor en route to a fourth-round kayo defeat.

Louis, acting under instructions, waits almost in his corner as the fourth round opens. He slips inside Dempsey's left and flails loaded fists. First a twisting jab straightens Jack up like a hickory twig. A left hook rocks him off-balance. A right daggers the vital spot. A ring giant crumples.

But Dempsey isn't finished. He wobbles erect at the count of nine. His eyes are glossy. His lips curl back from his teeth in a snarl. He beckons with open glove for Louis to come and get him. Dempsey is fighting mad. A

Dempsey was a big heavyweight for his time, but "The Manassa Mauler" was dwarfed by Argentine giant Luis Firpo (right). The challenger's size didn't help during the fight, as Dempsey scored a second-round knockout (below).

THE RING RATINGS, *September 1937*

Petey Sarron

HEAVYWEIGHTS
World Champion: Joe Louis
1. Max Schmeling
2. Jimmy Braddock
3. Tommy Farr
4. Bob Pastor
5. Alberto Lovell
6. Maxie Rosenbloom
7. Nathan Mann
8. Al Ettore
9. Roscoe Toles
10. Red Burman

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS
World Champion: John Henry Lewis
1. Al Gainer
2. Jock McAvoy
3. Leo Kelly
4. Tiger Jack Fox
5. Fred Lenhart
6. Jack Gibbons
7. Allen Matthews
8. Gus Lesnevich
9. Alabama Kid
10. Melio Bettina

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
World Champion: Freddie Steele
1. Ken Overlin
2. Fred Apostoli
3. Billy Conn
4. Teddy Yarosz
5. Lou Brouillard
6. Ben Brown
7. Solly Krieger
8. Harry Balsamo
9. Walter Woods
10. Al Romero

WELTERWEIGHTS
World Champion: Barney Ross
1. Jack Carroll
2. Ceferino Garcia
3. Izzy Jannazzo
4. Fritzie Zivic
5. Gustave Eder
6. Cocoa Kid
7. Saverio Turiello
8. Holman Williams
9. Andrea Jessurun
10. Bobby Pacho

LIGHTWEIGHTS
World Champion: Lou Ambers
1. Pedro Montanez
2. Henry Armstrong
3. Wesley Ramey
4. Enrico Venturi
5. Davey Day
6. Billy Beauhold
7. Paul Junior
8. Eddie Cool
9. Norment Quarles
10. George Zengaras

FEATHERWEIGHTS
World Champion: Petey Sarron
1. Jackie Wilson
2. Freddie Miller
3. Mike Belloise
4. Tony Chavez
5. Joe Conde
6. Pete DeGrasse
7. Ginger Foran
8. Spider Kelly
9. Johnny Cusick
10. Kid Chocolate

BANTAMWEIGHTS
World Champion: Sixto Escobar
1. K.O. Morgan
2. Harry Jeffra
3. Lou Salica
4. Indian Quintana
5. Baby Yack
6. Frankie Martin
7. Aurel Toma
8. Johnny King
9. Horace Mann
10. Jackie Brown

FLYWEIGHTS
World Champion: Benny Lynch
1. Jim Warnock
2. Peter Kane
3. Tony Bostock
4. Small Montana
5. Valentin Angelmann
6. Pierre Louis
7. Mickey O'Neill
8. Ernst Weiss
9. Tut Whalley
10. Johnny Jurich

jab plops his nose and further heats his temper. His left hook free-wheels spasmodically and catches only brown arms. Jack unwinds a right with the hammers of hell in his gloves. It glances off the tawny jaw. Jack's left hook whirls under the brown elbow and knifes Louis' stomach. Dempsey is fighting himself back into the battle ... fighting on nerves and courage. A right whips home. Louis' head crashes against the ringboards. The bell saves him.

Action in the two corners becomes the cynosure of 100,000 pairs of eyes. Blackburn waves smelling salts under Louis' nostrils. Jack Kearns massages Dempsey's legs and moves his lips articulately.

Louis shuffles forward to meet Dempsey's rush, determined to gamble on an exchange of blows. His left hook scores high on the cheek. Dempsey weaves low and comes up with a whirring left hook that dents the soup line. The Negro is hurled back off-balance by the impact. Another left hook jars Joe's head back. His chin slants skyward and his eyes roll. Dempsey's right flashes like a bolt of electricity. Six inches it zooms to the tawny jaw.

The brown man's feet fly off the canvas. His head bumps the floor.

When they bounce like that, they never rebound. Several minutes later, Joe Louis comes around. The amber hand thrusts out to Jack Dempsey ... the ring killer of the ages.

***

That was the Jack Dempsey who uncoiled leather lightning at Toledo on July 4, 1919, to

disintegrate the mammoth Jess Willard. It was the Manassa Mauler who climbed back into the ring at the Polo Grounds that sultry September evening in 1923 and flattened the ape-man from the South American Pampas—Luis Angelus Firpo.

It was the Joe Louis who slashed the gigantic mountain which walks like a man, Primo Carnera, into confetti; who kneaded Max Baer's cast-iron chin into putty at Yankee Stadium during the summer of 1935.

It was the ring's greatest killers of modern glove warfare in a pseudo-showdown.

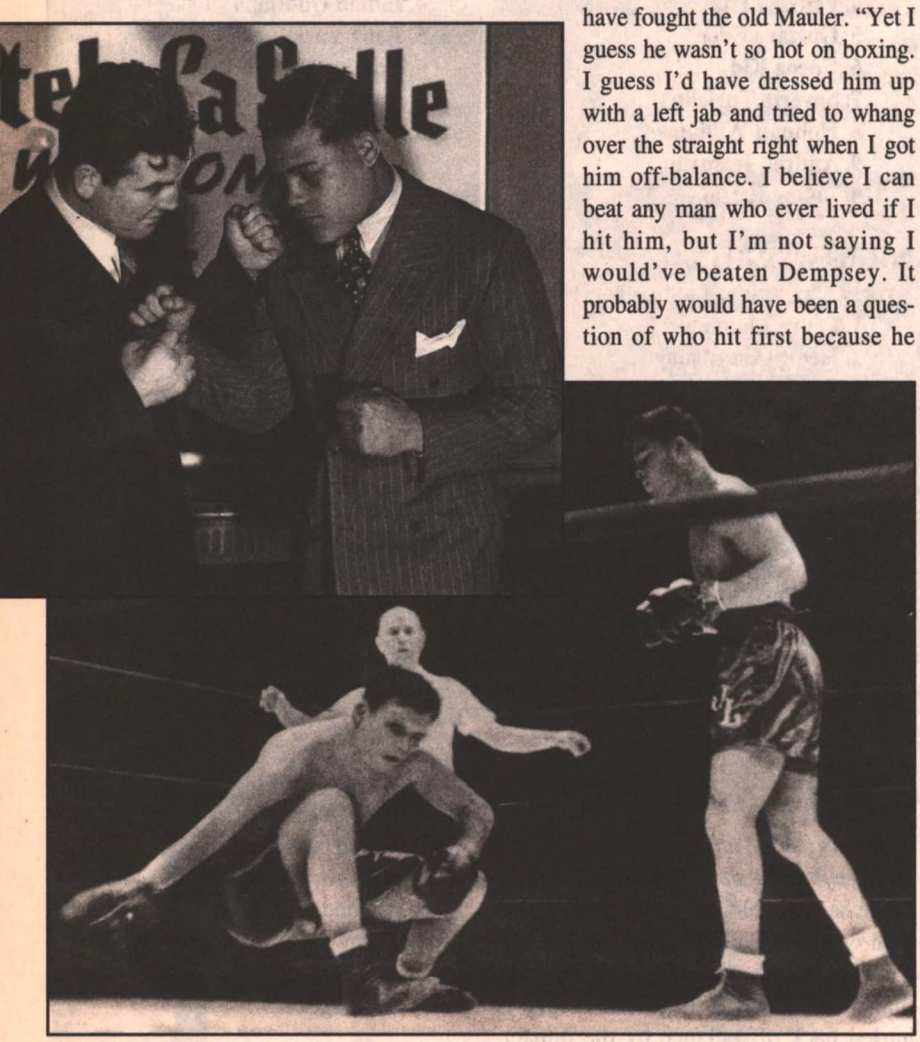
Greatness in athletes isn't made. It just happens like Topsy and the Depression. Super men just happen every so often. Like Babe Ruth in baseball, Bobby Jones in golf, and Jack Dempsey and Joe Louis in the ring.

Dempsey possessed more downright heart than any other fighter. His punch could match the Brown Bomber's sock, birdie for birdie. That devastating weapon was of the short, snap variety. The Manassa Mauler of 1919 could weave inside the best defense and sliver the strongest bodies. To evade his fretting glove-fire, a foe had to retreat behind an incessant hailstorm of jabs. Gene Tunney did that to outpoint Dempsey twice. Tom Gibbons did it until his aged legs lost their spring in the late rounds.

***

Dempsey at his best was a body riveter, and fighters who bead the soup line leave their chins open. Thus he was a target for the jab. Yet no one ever traded blows with Dempsey and remained erect at the final gong. And Louis at his best is a flatfooted puncher who shuffles into range on perfect balance.

"Jack Dempsey always has been my idol," said Louis when asked how he would have fought the old Mauler. "Yet I guess he wasn't so hot on boxing. I guess I'd have dressed him up with a left jab and tried to whang over the straight right when I got him off-balance. I believe I can beat any man who ever lived if I hit him, but I'm not saying I would've beaten Dempsey. It probably would have been a question of who hit first because he really could go to town with his sock."



Louis poses with heavyweight champion Jim Braddock before their June 1937 showdown at Comiskey Park in Chicago (top). After suffering a flash knockdown, Louis rose from the canvas and calmly punished the titlist until scoring an impressive eighth-round kayo (above).

***

Joe's admiration for Dempsey dates back to his school days in Detroit. One September evening in 1927, his kinky head protruded from a group of kids huddled around a radio and he yodeled, "Hot diggety—Dempsey's got him!"

Gene Tunney was on the floor in Soldier Field, Chicago, and little Joseph Louis Barrow, then only 13, was straining his tonsils in glee. But Tunney got off the canvas and finished spearing the decision, so the Negro youngster vowed to avenge by some day knocking out all the Gene Tunneys. Thus Joe Louis (he doesn't use the Barrow name anymore) patterned a ring career after the old Dempsey in one respect: He became a killer. He knocked out 22 of his first 26 professional opponents, mowing a path through the heavyweight division.

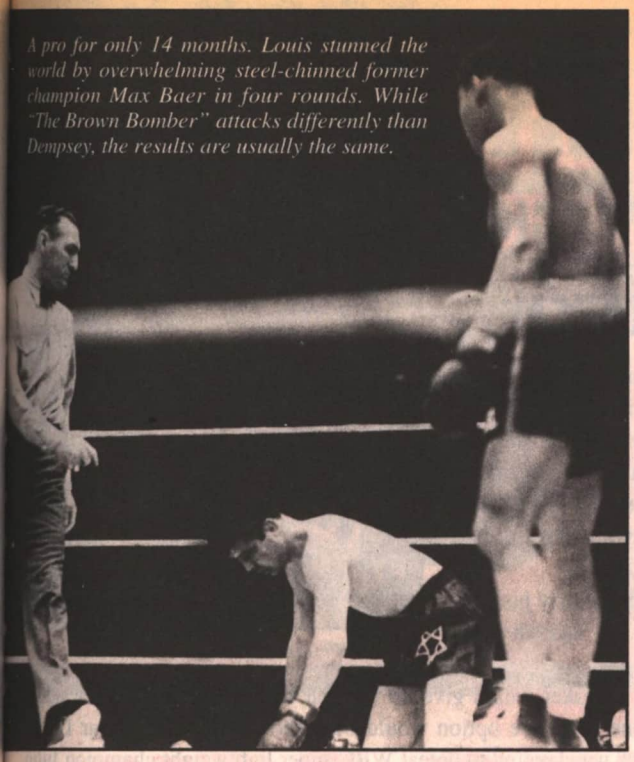
Max Schmeling proved that Louis was human, after all. He made a mistake and he was knocked out. After seeing that one setback of Louis' meteoric career, Dempsey declared that the Brown Bomber couldn't take a solid punch.

What the old Mauler really meant was that Louis lost his cunning after being badly hurt; that he didn't recuperate as, yes, Dempsey, but the Negro stood in there until his jaw was swollen as big as a medicine ball, and until he had absorbed 70 right-hand sledges from the sturdy German before going out. Joe got up twice and fought back.

Louis placed the blame for this one reverse squarely upon himself. "I let old man overconfidence get me," he said. "I got cocky; thought I could name the round and the punch I would ice Schmeling. I listened to all that foolish talk about me being invincible.

"After the first round, when I jabbed Max at will, I returned to my corner and told trainer Jack Blackburn, 'This is the easiest fight of my career. I can nail him anytime.' Then I walked out for the second round, dropped my left hand carelessly-like, and got nailed with a right. They tell me I was hit 70 times with Schmeling's right, but that first punch hit the button. I fought in a daze the other 10 rounds before going out."

We cannot throw out the Schmeling upset, no more than we can throw out



A pro for only 14 months, Louis stunned the world by overwhelming steel-chinned former champion Max Baer in four rounds. While "The Brown Bomber" attacks differently than Dempsey, the results are usually the same.

Fireman Jim Flynn's knockout of Dempsey in 1915.

No fighter could go to town like Dempsey after being badly hurt. The Manassa Mauler's nervous reaction was the best in ring history. Once stunned, he became a wounded tiger, flailing with deadly gloves.

Firpo could outhit Louis, if given elbow-room for his barroom swings. His sledgehammer fists unwound with their full fury on Dempsey's chin a second after the opening gong.

Billy Gibson, who later managed Tunney in his triumphs over Dempsey, was one of the South American's advisers. "Disregard the rules," instructed Gibson. "When you go out to shake hands, let a right go for Dempsey's chin. He'll be cold then, and you might hurt him badly."

Dempsey reached to shake hands. Firpo swished a long uppercut which caught the Mauler's vulnerable spot. Jack was dazed and fought the rest of that first round out on his feet.

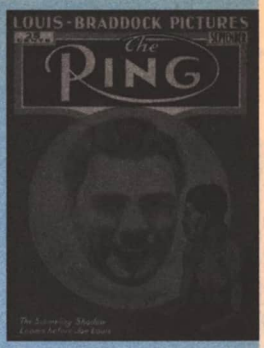
Eight times he dropped the pachyderm "Wild Bull Of The Pampas" with short left hooks. Then Jack stood near the ropes as if petrified as Firpo charged into him, swishing that right fist like an ax head. One mighty swing struck Jack's left shoulder. His knees buckled. He tried to back away from the next slingshot glove, and its impact upon his jaw drove him through the ropes.

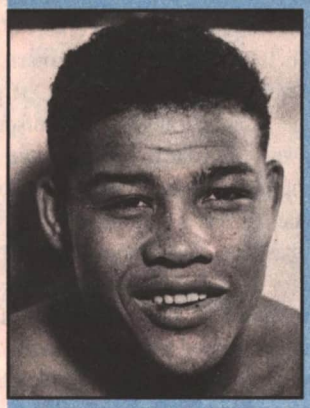
I was sitting just a row behind where the Mauler landed in the press section. He obviously was groggy. His senses were hazy. His eyes turned to magnified glass balls. Someone shoved him forward. Jack quivered, then scrambled up, pulled himself onto the ring platform, and was back in the resin trench. And, once there, he raced forward, shifted his shoulders, and dropped the gorilla man with one galvanic thrust of his left hand.

That was enough to win any pseudo-combat in my book ... even over the ominous Joe Louis—now world heavyweight champion. ■

THE RING, September 1937

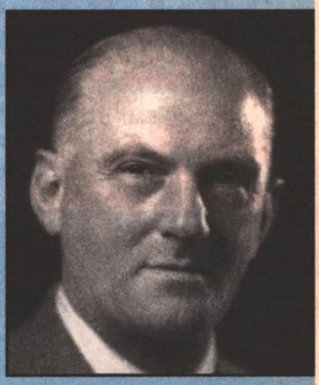
The Cover: Joe Louis may be heavyweight champion, but even the fearsome "Brown Bomber" acknowledges that he won't feel like a legitimate titlist until he avenges his defeat at the hands of Max Schmeling. The German is first on the champion's hit list.

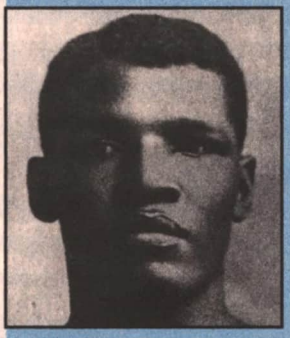




Louis' Improvement: In light of Joe Louis' title fight kayo victory over Jim Braddock, Editor and Publisher Nat Fleischer examines "The Brown Bomber's" dramatic improvement since his sole loss, a kayo defeat vs. Max Schmeling in June 1936.

King Of Boxing: Mike Jacobs, the head of the Twentieth Century Sporting Club and the promoter of heavyweight champion Joe Louis, has become the most powerful man in boxing. Jacobs is planning an unprecedented four-title fight card later this year—and it doesn't even include Louis!



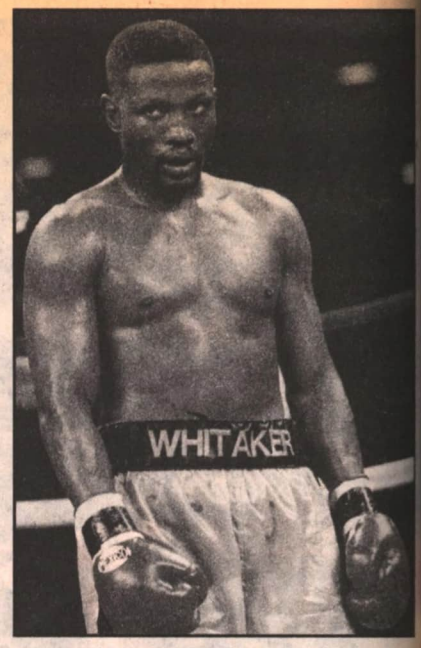


The Great White Hope: The coronation of Joe Louis brought to mind the fate of boxing's great Negro heavyweights, including bare-knuckle brawler Tom Molineaux, Peter Jackson (pictured), and Jack Johnson. With Louis on the throne, the "White Hope" craze is sure to be revived.

Matchmaker Adolf: In his column, Daniel M. Daniel reports that German Fuehrer Adolf Hitler may instruct top-ranked heavyweight contender Max Schmeling (pictured) to force Joe Louis to come to him. That doesn't sound like the plan promoter Mike Jacobs has in mind.

LOOKING AHEAD

By Steve Farhood



Whitaker: "Let's not play two"

UNWELCOMED REMATCH

One week after the WBC ordered an immediate rematch between welterweight champion Pernell Whitaker and Wilfredo Rivera, "Sweet Pea," who edged Rivera by split decision in April, went into hiding in Houston. "Right now he's mad," reported trainer Ronnie Shields. "He's disgusted. He came down here to get away. He beat the number-one guy and what did he gain? That's why he's asking, 'Why a rematch?'"

Added Shields, "He's very disappointed and he may just call it quits. He may say, 'I've done a lot for boxing, and what has boxing done for me?' He's hinting at that."

Shields wouldn't go as far as to say that Whitaker would give up the belt before fighting Rivera again. Should Whitaker indeed choose to vacate, one attractive option would be a showdown with Oscar De La Hoya. (As we went to press, "The Golden Boy" was favored to defeat WBC super lightweight champion Julio Cesar Chavez on June 7.) But according to Main Events, which promotes Whitaker, a return bout with Rivera will take place in late-September or early-October, as part of an HBO-televised doubleheader that includes a rematch between IBF junior lightweight champion Arturo Gatti and Tracy Patterson.

Whitaker wants and desperately needs a big fight. A return with Rivera is definitely not that. Their first meeting was not particularly exciting, or, for that matter, controversial. The bout he wants most is a showdown with IBF welterweight champion Felix Trinidad, who is promoted by Don King. But according to Whitaker's manager, Shelly Finkel, the chances of that fight finally materializing are, at best, 50-50. And at this point, a unification battle pitting Whitaker against WBA champion Ike Quartey is highly unlikely.

The forecast: Whitaker's future is cloudy, and a rematch with Rivera will be like a light drizzle. Pass the umbrellas.

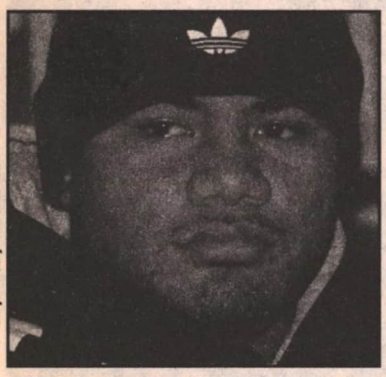


Photo by Teddy Blackburn

Tua: Set for Darroll Wilson showdown

LISTEN UP

Look for the second installment of HBO's Young Heavyweights series in September. There will be three bouts, including **David Tua-Darroll Wilson** ... July 13 on CBS: **Lou Savarese** vs. **Buster Mathis Jr.** ... WBC middleweight champion **Keith Holmes'** first defense will come against former titlist **Jorge Castro**. The winner will face the mandatory challenger, England's **Richie Woodhall** ... In May, **Thomas Hearns** and promoter **Harold Smith** were spotted in Las Vegas, trying to sell a Hearns-**Roy Jones** fight to the casinos. **Stan Levin**, who advises Jones, is open to the bout, but the guess here is that image-conscious HBO and its pay-per-view arm, TVKO, won't touch it because Hearn$ is perceived to be damaged goods.

FUTURE FIGHTS

By Art Manteris

VP/Director of Race and Sports Operations Las Vegas Hilton SuperBook

Favorite	Underdog	Odds	The Skinny
Mike Tyson	Bruce Seldon	25-1	Seldon has no chance—everybody knows it
Mike Tyson	Lennox Lewis	8-1	Lewis lucky to get by Mercer
Marco Antonio Barrera	Junior Jones	6-1	Jones no soft touch, but Barrera too much
Riddick Bowe	Andrew Golota	14-1	Golota nowhere near ready
Pernell Whitaker	Wilfredo Rivera	4-1	Won't be so close this time

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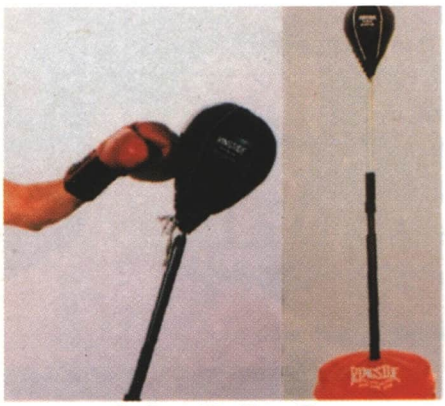
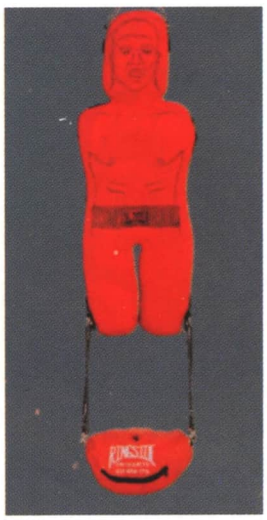
COBRA – FREE STANDING – DOUBLE-END



Cobra Reflex Bag

#CRB-1 (Filled Base) **$115.00**
#CRBU-1 Plus $10.00 Additional Shipping ..... **$ 95.00**
(Unfilled Base)
Must Be Prepaid



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#ET ..... (Red) (Canvas) ..... **$139.**

#ET-1 ..... (Black) (Leather) ..... **$199.**
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- Available in Red Only.

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NO HANGING HASSLES!

Double End Bags

- All Leather
- Triple Stitched

	(Diameter)	Your Cost
#DEB	(9")	**$38.00**
#DEB-1	(7")	**$38.00**
#DEB-2	(6")	**$38.00**
#DEB-3	(5")	**$38.00**

Speed Bags

- 5 Great Sizes
- All Kangaroo Skin Leather

#RPSB-XS ... (7"x4" Mini Pro) ... **$32.**
#RPSB-S ... (8"x5" Peanut Bag) ... **$32.**
#RPSB-M ... (9"x6") ... **$32.**
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